

S I X T E E N
DISCOURSES

UPON THE

Following Subjects,

V I Z.

The Dignity and Humiliation of the Son of God. The Resurrection of Christ. The Exaltation of Christ; and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. The Certainty of a future Judgment. The Goodness of God Almighty. The Triumphs of a true Christian Faith. The Necessity of Christian Practice in order to Happiness, and the Certainty of Happiness upon Christian Practice. The Worship of God in the Beauty of Holiness explain'd and enforc'd. The Duty of mutual Love explain'd and enforc'd. The happy Consequences of Afflictions to sincere Christians. The Treatment which Persons in Distress meet with from their Acquaintance and Enemies consider'd and dissuaded from.

To which is subjoin'd,

A *Brief ENQUIRY* into the Causes why the Word *Preach'd* doth not Profit; together with a Consideration of the Folly and Danger of being influenc'd by 'em.

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49
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И Н О У



To the Right Honourable

J O H N

Lord Viscount *Lymington*.

May it please your Grace,

AS the Ability of *requiting* Favours administers an exceeding Satisfaction to a grateful Mind; so, where that Ability is wanting, every Opportunity of *acknowledging* Favours, affords no small Delight to him that is possessed with a due *Sense* of them.

I Cannot therefore but be glad, my Lord, of this Occasion of Addressing myself,

DEDICATION.

self to your Lordship, and humbly desiring
~~your~~ Acceptance of the following Dis-
courses; as a *true*, tho' a *small* Token of
that *great* Esteem and Affection I ought
always to bear you.

Your Lordship's Kindness to me upon
your first Knowledge of me, the frequent
signal Repetitions of it presently after, and
the continuance of it hitherto, have for
ever endear'd your Lordship *to* me, and
shall never be forgotten *by* me. At the
same Time, I cannot but look upon, and
value this Leave, to mention your Lord-
ship's Favours as a great Enhancement of
them all.

And should I enlarge upon your Lord-
ship's hearty Love for your Country, your
Zeal for the Protestant Interest, your Af-
fection for the glorious Defender of it,
and his Royal Progeny, together with the
~~rest of those Accomplishments which at-~~
tend, illustrate, and adorn every Relation
of Life you sustain, 'twould be no more
than what is justly due to your Lordship.

But since Those who best *deserve*
Praise, are least desirous *of* it, and most
apt to be disgusted *with* it, therefore for
fear of offending where I am particularly
ambitious of pleasing, I must deny my-
self the Satisfaction of taking any farther
Notice,

DEDICATION.

Notice, in this Place, of those amiable
Virtues and Qualities, which gain your
Lordship a great Esteem and Respect a-
mong all good Men in general, as well as
more especially oblige me to be with all
suitable Deference and Gratitude,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most dutiful and

obedient Servant,

STEPHEN CLARKE.

T H E

P R E F A C E.

MY Intention here is not to apologize for publishing the following Pages, (which I think needless) but to bespeak of the Reader, a calm and impartial Perusal of 'em.

When a Man has deliver'd any thing to the Public (after all he can say for himself) he must expect to meet with different Opinions concerning it : And as he ought not to be elated upon the Approbation of the Candid, so he would not be a little blame-worthy to be dejected at the unkind Reflections of the Censorious.

'Twould be to little Purpose to urge any thing in Behalf of the following Discourses, if they should not be allowed a calm and impartial Perusal : This if they obtain,

P R E F A C E.

obtain, my pleading nothing for their Publication will not, I hope, render 'em the less useful.

The Cause I have mention'd, as hindering the Efficacy of the Word Preach'd, are very common, and within the Reach of almost every one's Observation. I have open'd them with a just Freedom and Plainness; because People are so backward to apply things as they ought, that unless their Pictures are drawn pretty near to the Life, they will not think themselves concern'd; and indeed hardly if they be.

But if after the Reading of what is deliver'd under each Article in the former Part of that Discourse, Persons would lay their Hands upon their Breasts, and coolly examine, whether they don't find their own Case to be touch'd; and then reflect upon the Unreasonableness of continuing therein; (in doing which, those Thoughts I have suggested upon every Particular in the latter Part of the same Discourse, may assist them) If, I say, they would do thus, they might perhaps be brought to a Sight, and Sense of their own Faults; be prevail'd upon to amend their Behaviour; and become more profitable

P R E F A C E.

*fitable Hearers of the Word Preach'd
for the future.*

*If what is here offer'd to the World,
proves instrumental in promoting the
Good of others, let God have their Praises,
and me have their Prayers; and then my
Trouble will me most amply Rewarded.*

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SERMON

SERMON I.

I John iv. 9, 10, 11.

In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' him.

Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

AS the Nature of God is incomprehensible, so his Works are unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out: *EVERY* Operation of his Hands is inexpressibly wonderful; and the most inconsiderable of his Doings will, if attentively view'd, be very *marvellous in our Eyes*. But I believe, there is not any can justly be thought more strange, than his effecting the Incarnation

B

of

of *his only begotten Son*: Which is a Work of such a myſterious Nature, as raiſes the Curioſity ^a of Angels to pry into it; and allows not the moſt enlarged of human Capacities fully to underſtand it. Though we put our intellectual Faculties upon the utmoſt Stretch, we ſhall ſtill behold this Myſtery *as through a Glaſs, darkly*; all our Knowledge of it will be but *in Part*: And to think that *we can by ſearching find it out to Perfection, is Vanity of Vanities, and nothing but Vanity.*

Alas! the corruptible body preſſeth down the Soul; and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind that muſeth upon many things; ſo that imperfect and uncertain is our Acquaintance even with the things that are of the *Earth*: How much more doubtful and imperfect muſt our Learning then be, in the things which are from *Heaven*? We are very much in the dark as to the Union of our Souls and Bodies: We cannot give a ſure and ſatisfactory Account, how two ſuch different Beings as Spirit and Matter influence one another in their ſeveral Motions, as Experience certifies they do: What abſurd Arrogance then muſt it be, to pretend to

^a 1 Pet. i. 12.

conceive the nature of the Hypostatick Union of God and Man? Or clearly to apprehend the Manner in which the Divine and Human Natures are joined together in one Person, and yet remain two compleat and distinct Natures, so that the same Person is at the same time truly God, and truly Man?

These things are far beyond our reach; and therefore when we commemorate them, we ought humbly to admire the Proceedings of Divine Wisdom, without attempting to measure them by the scanty Line of finite Understanding. When we celebrate the coming of CHRIST into the World, it becometh us readily to embrace this Doctrine which is *worthy of all acceptance*, without puzzling ourselves with unnecessary Inquiries concerning it. We should not boldly examine into that which God hath kept secret, but content ourselves with knowing and believing that which he hath revealed, in the Simplicity wherewith he hath revealed it.

If we follow these Rules, our Faith will be preserved pure and undefiled; whereas by endeavouring to comprehend Things incomprehensible, and to explain Things inexplicable; 'tis very *probable* that we

shall become Hereticks; 'tis very *certain* we cannot become more Orthodox.

✱ Wherefore instead of amusing ourselves with such dangerous and empty Speculations, let us contemplate those glorious Attributes of God which were most nearly concerned in the Accomplishment of our Redemption. Revere we his *Justice* which would not forgive Sin, without inflicting the Punishment it deserved. Admire we his *Wisdom* which found out a Way to inflict that Punishment without destroying the Sinner. Stand we in Awe of his *Power* which so wonderfully brought to pass his Design. But above all, Praise we and Adore his infinite LOVE which inclined him, to exercise the fore-mentioned Attributes in such a gracious Manner. 'Twas his LOVE which put his Wisdom upon contriving a *Propitiation for our Sins*. 'Twas his LOVE which moved his Power to effect that which his Wisdom contriv'd. 'Twas his LOVE which abated the Rigour of his Justice, render'd it willing to accept the vicarious Suffering of an innocent Person, and concur with the Efforts of his Wisdom and Power. *In this then the LOVE of God seems principally to be manifested, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the World that*

that we might live through him. Herein is LOVE, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Which Words naturally lead us to reflect upon these Things:

First, The Dignity of the Person who, as at this time ^c, was sent into the World; together with the Humiliation and Abasement which he condescended to submit unto! God sent his only-begotten Son into the World.

Secondly, The End for which he was sent into the World, and submitted to that Humiliation and Abasement! God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him; or to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

Thirdly, The exceedingly great Love of God to Mankind evidenc'd by this Action. In THIS was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. HEREIN is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

^c Preached on Christmas-day.

Lastly, The Inference which the Apostle draws from this Love of God towards us *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

First, Then we are to reflect upon the Dignity of the Person who, as at this time, was sent into the World, together with the Humiliation and Abasement which he condescended to submit unto. ~~As to the~~ Dignity of his Person, our Opinions of *That* be very disproportionate and unworthy, if with the ^d *Arians* we believe him to be a Creature, though of never so excellent or angelical an Order. Neither will our Esteem be any more just or suitable to his Worth, if, with the ^e *Socinians*, we look upon him only as a great Prophet, commissioned by God in a most extraordinary manner. For notwithstanding that Beings in this Order and Relation, are *vastly superior* to others in Dignity; yet their Dignity is *infinitely below* the Dignity of CHRIST JESUS, *who justly thought it no Robbery to be equal with God*; and whom therefore we shall rob of his Honour by denying that Equality: Inasmuch as *all the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in him*; he being as St. John

^d See Bishop Burnet's Exposition on xxxix Articles, Art. II.

^e *Ibidem.*

doth here tell us, *the only-begotten Son of God.* So then whensoever we behold and consider his Dignity and Glory, we must *behold* and consider *the Dignity and Glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father.*

Now the Dignity and Glory of *the only-begotten of the Father*, is equal to the Dignity and Glory of God the Father, by whom he was Begotten: The reason is, because the only begotten Son of God, is a Person of the same Nature with God; or in the Words of the Nicene Creed, *He is very God of very God.* For that this Title here given to our Saviour, cannot be understood in a figurative Sense, is evident from this obvious Remark; to wit, that several other Persons are in the Scriptures called *the^f Sons of God*, and are said *to be^g begotten of God*, in a figurative Sense: So that if our Saviour was the begotten Son of God, in the *same* Sense with them, it could not be affirm'd of him, that he was God's *only-begotten Son.* These Words therefore must necessarily be taken in the most *strict and proper* Signification; and then they deduce thus much: Namely, that JESUS CHRIST is a Person, to whom alone the

^f John i. 12. & multis aliis in locis. ^g 1 John v. 18.

whole nature of God, was communicated by an eternal Generation from God. For the strict and proper Notion of an only-begotten Son, is a Person to whom alone the whole Nature of his Father is communicated by Generation from him who is his Father: If then JESUS CHRIST is most strictly and properly *the only begotten Son of God*, he must be the *only* Person to whom the whole Nature of God was communicated by Generation from God. And this manner of communicating the Divinity to CHRIST, is the Cause, why the Name of Son is *appropriated* to him, and not given to the Holy Ghost, who received the Divinity not by Generation, but by Procession.

Again, the Nature of God being purely Spiritual, is consequently without Parts, and consequently not to be divided: And therefore since there was a Communication of the Divine Nature to the Son, it must be a Communication of the whole Nature of God, or of *all the fullness of the Godhead*. Now if all fullness of the God-head, was communicated, to the Son by Generation from God the Father, then it was communicated by an *eternal* Generation, otherwise he could not have existed from Eternity, and for that Reason,

son, could not have had the fullness of the God-head; Eternity of Existence being as necessary to the fullness of the God-head, as any other Perfection whatsoever.

Since then it appeareth, that JESUS CHRIST is a Person who enjoys all the fullness of the God-head, or the whole Nature of God, it is evident that he is most truly and properly God: For who can enjoy the whole Nature of God, besides God himself?

Agreeably to this, St. *John* in the 1st Chap. of his Gospel, lays down this Assertion concerning him, *And the Word was God.* Where that by the *Word*, is to be understood CHRIST JESUS, is plain from the 14th Verse of the same Chapter. And this Assertion which the Evangelist has concerning him at the 1st Verse, he strongly confirms at the 3d, by ascribing to him the Work of Creation; *All Things*, says he, *were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made:* And if so, then certainly he is God; it being a most undeniable Truth, that *he who made all Things is God.*

The same Doctrine of our Saviours Divinity, is so frequently and plainly delivered in the Scriptures, that I shall not here insist any longer upon it: I shall only
 Remark,

Remark, that *THIS* is agreeable to the most *easy and natural* Interpretation of the Scriptures; whereas the opposite Doctrine is founded upon the most *unnatural and violent* Construction of them: And whether it was the Design of the Holy Ghost, that we should be guided by the Former, or by the Latter, I leave to every sober, unprejudic'd Man to determine.

Such then being the Dignity of the Person, who, as at this time, was sent into the World; how great must the Humiliation and Abasement be, which he condescended to, by being sent into the World! As he was God, he was always in it since 'twas created; before which Time, even from Eternity, his Presence necessarily was; as to Eternity it necessarily must be, boundless and uncircumscrib'd. * This Expression therefore in the Text, of his being *sent into the World*, hath relation to his taking our Nature upon him. Which he did, as at this Time, under very low and mean Circumstances. For he did not disdain to be born of a poor Virgin; who tho' she was *highly favour'd* by God, was nevertheless so much neglected by Men, that she could not procure of them a convenient Place, to bring forth their Saviour: So that *he who was born King of the Jews*,
was

was forced to accept of a *Stable* for his Palace, and a *Manger* for his Cradle.

And how soon after his Birth, did Affliction befall him? He was not many Days old before the cruel Jealousie of *Herod*, obliged him to quit his native Country; and drove him to seek for Liberty, *in the House of Bondage*. The whole Course of his Life, was one continu'd Scene of Humility and Sorrow. The private Part of it he spent in ^h Subjection to *Joseph*, and his Mother *Mary*, and very probably work'd at the mean Trade of his reputed Father. And after he entered upon his propheticall Office; many and painful were the Journies which he took; heavy the Tribulations which he underwent; malicious and severe were the Reproaches which he suffered; till at last he yielded himself up to Death, upon an ignominious Cross, *commending his Spirit, into the Hands of his Father*; and submitting his Body to the Abasement of a Grave. So surprizingly great was the Humiliation

^h Luke iii. 31.

ⁱ See *Mark* vi. 3. And *Justin Martyr*, who flourished about the middle of the 2d Century, in his Dialogue with *Trypho* the Jew, has these Words, "When he liv'd amongst Men, he made those Things belonging to the Carpenters Trade, viz. Ploughs and Yokes." *Vide citatum Dialogum*, pag. 316. op. Ed. Par. 1636.

and

and Abasement, to which the only-begotten Son of God condescended. It is now time that we move forward, to consider.

Secondly, the End for which he was sent into the World, and submitted to that Humiliation and Abasement, *God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him*; THIS was the principal End of his coming; and in order to this, *He was sent to be the Propitiation for our Sins*. For we were all concluded under Sin; and because *the Wages of Sin is Death*, and the Majesty affronted by Sin infinite; we were under an Obligation to suffer eternal Death, from which we could not be delivered unless our Sins were first forgiven; And before this could be done, God's Justice required Satisfaction to be made. But now that Person alone could make Satisfaction, who was himself free from all Sin; and in whom the Man-hood and God-head were joined together.

The Person who could satisfy infinite Justice, must himself be free from all Sin, because 'twas impossible for a Sinner to satisfy for himself: All that a Sinner could do, would be finite and imperfect; but the Satisfaction demanded, was perfect
and

and infinite: And if he could not satisfy for himself, much less could he for all Mankind. *Such an high Priest therefore became us, who was Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens; who had no Sins of his own to offer up Sacrifice for.*

Again, he must partake of the Human Nature, that so Punishment might be undergone for Sin, in that Nature which sin'd: *Forasmuch as we Sinners were partakers of Flesh and Blood, it behoved him also to take part of the same; that therein he might be made like unto us, and be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People.*

And lastly, it was necessary that he should partake of the *Divine* Nature too, that from *thence* the Obedience which he perform'd, and those Sufferings which he underwent, in his *Human* Nature, might receive so much Virtue and Merit, as to make full Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. No Person could be a Propitiation for our Sins, but he that could make a Satisfaction of infinite Value for them. For our Sins being committed against God, who is a Being of in-

finite Excellency, must therefore be infinite in Guilt and Hainousness: And how can we imagine, that infinite Justice should be appeas'd, and render'd favourable, unless it receiv'd a Satisfaction answerable to the Injury it sustain'd by Sin: The Guilt and Hainousness of our Sins being infinite, the Satisfaction for them, must be likewise infinite in Worth and Value. But who could make a Satisfaction of *infinite* Worth and Value, except a Person of the *same* Worth and Value? Or what Blood could be precious enough to Redeem us from Wrath, or to Atone for our Offences, except the *Blood of God* himself, whom by our Sins we had offend-
ed? *

From what has been said, we may easily give an Account, why the only-begotten Son of God was sent into the World, and submitted to so much Humiliation and Abasement. 'Twas *that he might become such an High Priest, as our Condition required, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, made higher than the Heavens.* 'Twas *that he might slay the Enmity which was between God and Man;* and render us once more the Objects of his Favour. 'Twas that our actual Sins, which were red as the Blood he shed, when

when he was *Crucified*; might become White, as the Light he shone in when he was *Transfigur'd*: And that the Poyson deriv'd from eating of the forbidden Tree in *Eden*, might be expell'd by the Virtue of that Fruit, which hung upon the accursed Tree in *Calvary*. In a Word; 'Twas that we might be Redeemed from the *Curse of the Law*, from eternal Death and Destruction; and be made capable to enjoy, and put in a Way to obtain all the Blessings included in Life Everlasting.

Thirdly therefore, let us behold the exceedingly great Love of God to Mankind, evidenc'd by this Action: *In THIS was manifested the Love of God towards us; HEREIN is Love*. This doubling the Assertion, makes it remarkably Emphatical, and plainly implies, that this was the greatest Instance of Divine Love, that was ever given.

Numerous and great are the Evils to which we are continually expos'd, and the Love of God eminently seen in protecting us from *them*; but his Love appeareth far more illustrious in working out our Redemption, because *hereby* we are deliver'd from the greatest of all Evils, from the Bondage of Sin, and eternal Damnation.

It was a noble Proof of Divine Love to form us out of Nothing, and place us in a State of Felicity; but to redeem us after we had received a happy Existence from him, and made ourselves unworthy of so much Kindness, is a Proof of Divine Love more noble than *that*. For though before we had a Being, there could be nothing done that might deserve God's *Love*, yet there also could be nothing done which might deserve his *Hatred or Anger*: Whereas our Redemption supposes that we had incurr'd his heavy Displeasure, and provok'd his *Anger to wax hot* against us, for transgressing the Command he had given us to observe: And certainly to restore us to a State of Bliss after we had lost it, by provoking and affronting him, argues a much greater Degree of Love, than to place us in such a State, before we had provoked or affronted him at all. *One* of these Acts of Love was exercised before we had deserved God's Favour; but the *other* after we had ungratefully abused it: *One* of them was shown when we only wanted somewhat to be reckon'd his *Friends*, the *other* after we had actually made ourselves his *Enemies*. And therefore St. Paul, in Rom. v. 8. takes especial Notice of this; *That God commendeth his*
Love

Love towards us, in that, while we were yet Sinners CHRIST died for us: And at the 10th Verse of the same Chapter, he observes to us, *that while we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son.*

Which suggests to us another Consideration that greatly enhances this Love of God towards us. For God so loved the World, that he sent no less a Person than *his own Son*, and so well-beloved by him as *his only-begotten Son*, to accomplish our Redemption: And therefore the height of his Love must necessarily be very much encreased, in proportion to the Deepness of that Abasement which it caused a Person of his infinite Dignity to submit unto.

Lastly, The Love of God may well be said to be manifested towards us in accomplishing our Redemption, because 'twas a Favour denied to others, who were in like Circumstances with ourselves. *The Angels which kept not their first Estate; but left their own Habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting Chains of darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day:* How great Love then must he have for fall'n Man, to be thus mindful of him, and to ransom him! And for the Sons of

Man, that he should thus graciously visit them! If we enquire into the Reasons of such a distinguishing Dispensation of Divine Grace, a very good one I conceive is, because the *Angels* fell of their own Malice, being not deluded by any Tempter besides themselves; whereas Man was drawn to transgress by their deceitful Solicitations. This is ingeniously taken Notice of by an excellent *English* Poet; where he introduces the Almighty, declaring his Purpose finally to reject the fallen Angels, and to restore Man to his Favour. His Words are as follow.

*The first sort by their own Suggestion fell
Self-tempted, self-deprav'd: Man falls
deceiv'd*

*By the Other first: Man therefore shall
find Grace,
The Other none.*

But notwithstanding all this, it must be still acknowledg'd owing to God's *peculiar* Love, that such a Difference should be made between us and them. As may also be hinted in the Lines immediately following those that I have quoted, in which he continues the Almighty's Speech in this manner:

Milton in His Paradise Lost. Book 3.

another

— In

— In Mercy and Justice both,
 Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my
 Glory excel;
 But Mercy first and last, shall brightest
 shine.

* And indeed, *this* has the greatest Reason
 to support it; for we find as well as
 they, and though the Strength of our
 Temptation might in some measure ex-
 tenuate our Crime, and the Punishment
 it deserved; yet it could not fully excuse
 either. And therefore to the Question,
 Why God should have Pity upon us, and
 Ruin them forever? The best Answer we
 can give, is, Grace, Mercy, and Forgive-
 ness; free Grace, unoblig'd Mercy, and
 undeserv'd Forgiveness: Without thesewe
 had been undone for ever too. Thus
 have we beheld what manner of Love the
 Father hath bestow'd upon us, in sending
 his only-begotten Son to redeem us. And
 now surely 'tis but natural, in the
 Fourth and last Place, That we make
 the Apostle's Inference: Beloved, if God so
 loved us, we ought also to love one another.
 Of so great Value were we in his Sight, that
 the Blood of his only-begotten Son was
 not counted too dear for our Ransom:
 Shall we then undervalue and despise one
 another

another? *He* never doth us any Injury; and shall we mutually bite and devour *ourselves*? The Overflowings of *his* Loving-kindness are frequently descending upon the World; and shall *we* neglect being beneficial to it when we have Opportunity? *He* delights in pardoning our Offences; and shall *we* be unsatisfied except we avenge ourselves? No; these are not Effects of Love, but of Hatred, and very ill become those who pretend to be Disciples of a Saviour. It is necessary, that we should imitate God's Goodness, by exercising such Acts of Love as *he* doth: *This* is what his Love *deserves*; *This* is what his Love *expects*.

Be it therefore our constant Care and Concern to shew our Love to one another, in putting forth the genuine Fruits of it: *In esteeming each other's Persons: In abstaining from offering Injuries: In doing Kindness, and forgiving Wrongs.*

If we are careful to love one another in *this* manner; we shall therein offer to God an acceptable Sacrifice of Thanksgiving for his exceedingly great Love towards us: And whilst we commemorate the Coming of his only-begotten Son in great *Humility* to be our Saviour; we shall go a good Way in preparing ourselves

selves to meet him with Joy, when he cometh with great *Glory* to be our *Judge*.

SERMON ii.

Acts ii. 32. / *Cor* 15. 4.

This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are Witnesses.

THE Resurrection of **CHRIST** **JESUS**, as it is a principal Article of our Belief, so 'tis the Foundation upon which our whole Religion standeth; take away **THIS** and it all falls to the Ground. For, as St. Paul argues, *if CHRIST be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and our Faith is also vain.* So that unless *this* Point be true, the Doctrine of Christianity must needs be false; all its Proposals must be empty and fictitious; and *we by hoping in CHRIST may of all Men be most miserable.* But, blessed be God, the Foundation of our Religion is not so sandy: It remaineth firm and immoveable as a Rock; nothing being
more

more true, than that God hath raised *JESUS* from the dead, whereof the *Apostles* were sufficient *Witnesses*. And this Proof of his Resurrection shall be the Subject of my following Discourse.

But before I enter upon this, I desire it may be considered, that the Point in Hand, being a Matter of Fact, is incapable of receiving such a rigorous Demonstration, as that by which a mathematical Proposition may be proved: And in *this* Case no more can be required, than that it be attested by Persons of unquestionable Knowledge and Fidelity.

This being premised, I shall endeavour with all possible Brevity and Plainness to show,

First, That the Resurrection of *CHRIST* is clearly related in the Scriptures.

Secondly, That those who related this, were Persons of unquestionable Knowledge. And

Thirdly, That they were Persons of unquestionable Fidelity.

These Propositions being made good, the Truth of my Text, I conceive, will be sufficiently establish'd.

First, Then I am to show, that the Resur-

Resurrection of CHRIST is clearly related in the Scriptures. And I need not tarry long upon this Head; the Man who denies it, must be an utter Stranger to those sacred Pages. For in *them* we frequently read that the Body of CHRIST was buried in *a Tomb hewn out in a Rock, that a great Stone was laid to the Door of it,* which, after some Time, was *rolled away by an Angel,* whereupon CHRIST arose, and left the Grave Cloaths behind him. This is recorded by every one of the four Evangelists: The same Persons who mention his State of Humiliation, give us an Account of his State of Exaltation too; the same Persons who have penned the History of his shameful and slavish Death, have likewise registred his glorious and triumphant Resurrection from the Dead. St. Matthew says very plainly, that an Angel told the Woman who came to the Sepulchre to seek JESUS, that *he was not there, but was risen.* St. Mark says the same Thing almost in the same Words. St. Luke says, that *the Woman entred into the Sepulchre, and found not the Body of JESUS;* and it came to pass as they were much perplex'd about it, two Men stood by them in shining Garments, who said, *Why seek ye the Living among the Dead?*

Dead? He is not here, but is risen. And St. John says, that *as Mary wept, because she could not find the Body of her Lord, she turned herself back and saw JESUS standing* whom tho' at first Sight she did not know, yet upon his speaking to her, she quickly perceived to be her Master. Neither do the Evangelists give us only the Testimony of *others* to this Truth, but they confirm it also by their *own personal Knowledge*: They tell us that CHRIST shew'd himself to his Disciples in the same Body which was crucified, dead and buried; that they all talked with him; and that he eat with them after his Resurrection; as may be seen at large in the last Chapters of the Gospels. To this we may add, that the same Doctrine is deliver'd directly, or by Consequence, in every Part of those Writings which are extant of the other Apostles. So that nothing can be more evident than that the Resurrection of CHRIST is clearly related in the Scriptures; which was the first Thing to be made out. I shall now go on, to show,

Secondly, That those who related this, were Persons of unquestionable Knowledge; or in other Words, that they were thoroughly inform'd concerning the Fact which

which they related, and perfectly knew the Truth of that which they delivered. And this Point will be dispatched as easily as the former: For St. *Luke* tells us, *Acts* i. 3. that CHRIST shew'd himself alive to them after his Passion, by many **INFALLIBLE** Proofs. Of which no Body can well doubt, that considers *First*, How often CHRIST appeared to his Disciples after his Death; and *Secondly*, The manner of his Conversation with them.

As to the first of these, we read of no less than *ten* times of his Appearance before his Ascension. First of all at the Sepulchre to *Mary Magdalene*, out of whom he had cast seven Devils. Then to other Women as they returned from the Sepulchre, towards *Jerusalem*. Then to *Cephas*; then to two of his Disciples, as they went into the Country, the same Day towards *Emmaus*. Then to ten of them in the Evening of the same Day, *Thomas* being absent. Then to all the Apostles, *Thomas* being with them. After these Things, to the Disciples at the Sea of *Tiberius*. Then to above five hundred Brethren at once. After that to *James*. Then to all the Apostles, immediately before his Ascension. To which

we may add, that he was seen twice *after* his Ascension, cloathed with the highest Glory and Happiness in Heaven; to wit, once by St. *Stephen*, and once by St. *Paul*.

And if we farther consider the *manner* of his Conversation with them, while he was on Earth, we cannot but allow that they were fully certified of his Resurrection. For he continued with them for a long time together; discoursing upon the most Noble and sublime Subjects; giving them the most admirable Lectures in Divinity; and expounding the Scriptures with such a surprizing Strength and Exactness, that *that their Hearts burn'd within 'em*, even before they knew who he was. After which, at another Time of his Appearance, least they might suppose that they had seen a Spirit; he eat in their Presence *a Piece of a broil'd Fish, and of an Honey-Comb*; and moreover bid them handle him, that they might know that *he had Flesh and Bones, which a Spirit hath not*. And at another Time, he commanded *Thomas* to put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and to thrust his Hand into the Side which was pierc'd; So that nothing can be more manifest, than that the Apostles were assur'd of the Resurrection of **CHRIST**,

CHRIST, by the Evidence of their *Senses*: And this is the highest kind of Evidence of which human Nature is capable. * For when the Senses are employ'd about their proper Objects; if their Organs are in right Order or Disposition; and there are a due Distance, Medium, and Light, they cannot possibly be deceiv'd. * Since therefore none of these Things can be questioned, with regard to the Apostles; since they not only *saw* CHRIST alive after his Death, but also *heard* him Discourse, and *handled* his Body; it unavoidably follows, that they had unquestionable Knowledge of his Resurrection; and if so, then since *they* were the Persons, by whom the Resurrection of CHRIST was related in the Scriptures; it must likewise be concluded, that those who related the Resurrection of CHRIST, were Persons of unquestionable Knowledge, with regard to the Matter of Fact related by them; which was the second Proposition we undertook to prove.

I come now in the *Third* and *last* Place, To shew that they were Persons of unquestionable Fidelity: By which I mean, that they faithfully related the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. And what considering Man can believe otherwise? They being very Poor

and Ignorant, 'tis not likely they should be vers'd in the subtle Artifices of Deceit and Imposture. Besides, what End could they propose to themselves, by propagating a Falshood? Not to gain Honour, for they very well knew, as their Experience soon taught them, that Infamy, Scorn, and Reproach, would be their Treatment. Nor to gain Riches, for they were often depriv'd of what few Goods they already had upon this Account, and if they were not, yet they could not conveniently instruct Men the Doctrines which they deliver'd, without a *great*, perhaps *total* Neglect of their worldly Concerns. Nor in short, could they be induced to it, upon any other temporal Views, for it always expos'd them to, and generally drew upon them Hunger and Thirst, Persecution, and Imprisonment.

Again, how could they expect, that their Testimony should be embraced, which was so much against the rooted Prepossessions of Jews and Gentiles, in reference to their own ancient Religions; except they were certifi'd both of the Truth of that which they related; and also of Divine Assistance to encourage and support them?

Accordingly we find, that they did not
make

make known the Resurrection of CHRIST; and as a Consequent upon that, publish his Religion to the World; before they were aided *from Above, and endued with Power from on High*: but on the contrary, kept out of the Way as much as they could, and *met together secretly, for fear of the Jews.*

But farther, if we look more closely into the Matter, it will appear morally impossible, that any Imposture should be carried on in it. For it is to be consider'd, that there were not a few concerned in the Death of our Saviour. The whole *Sanhedrim*, and many of the People besides, were involv'd in the Guilt of it; and our Saviour having foretold his Resurrection on the third Day, they were resolv'd to look to it, and thereupon fixed a huge Stone to the Door of the Sepulchre, wherein his Body was laid; and appointed a Company of Soldiers, to keep and guard it: And there being at *Jerusalem* a great Confluence of People from all Parts of the *Jewish Nation*, to celebrate the Feast of the Passover; 'tis very probable, that a great many of them *were*, or at least *might* be, walking in the Fields at that Time, some sooner, and some later. Now if the Body of our Saviour was to be

stolen away by his Disciples; they must have first terrified, or conquer'd the Soldiers who watch'd it; which yet they could not so much as *attempt* to do, without causing such a Noise and Disturbance, as would have soon drawn great Numbers to the Aid of the Soldiers; and to the Destruction of themselves: Not to mention that they must have carefully hid his Body in another Place, which nevertheless would have been quickly discovered, by reason of the *remarkable* Wounds that were in it.

And now let us reflect a little upon the Whole. What a strange incredible Thing is it, that a few weak timorous Persons, *one* of whom had not long before forsworn CHRIST, and who had *all* cowardly deserted him, I say, how incredible is it, that these very Persons should all on a sudden, repose an entire Confidence in each other, and become so very Bold and Valiant, as to go upon the most hazardous Enterprize imaginable, when there is not the least Shadow of Reason to think so, but a great deal of it to the contrary? In short, *those who took Council together, against CHRIST to put him to Death,* must be counted void of common Sense, if they did not narrowly examine where
his

his Apostles went, and Abode after his Crucifixion; together with several other Things belonging to the same Business; Was it not that they were fully satisfied of the Truth of the Soldiers Relation, concerning his Resurrection: But they having determin'd to stifle this Evidence, could do no more than pretend to disregard the Matter; and only cry it down in general as an Imposture, without venturing to sift the Particulars of it, as being well aware, that 'twas impossible to disprove them.

Thus it appears how extreamly weak and trifling that Report was, which the Chief Priests and Elders invented; namely, that *the Disciples of CHRIST did come by Night, and steal him away, while the Guard slept.* Indeed there was hardly any Occasion for spending any Time in confuting it, it being so ridiculous and inconsistent, as to confute it self. For supposing that the Body of CHRIST was stolen away, while the Guard slept, how could the Guard tell who stole it away? But to say no more of *that*; who soever duly weighs what hath been deliver'd upon this Argument, will find it to be the most *reasonable* Thing in the World, to believe that the Apostles were honest and faithful in relating the Resurrection

rection of CHRIST; and the most *unreasonable* Thing in the World to believe the contrary. Especially, if he considers in the last Place, that they lay down their Lives, in confirmation of what they related, and by so doing, seal'd their Testimony with their Blood. For can it with any Sense be imagin'd, that Men who a little *before* their Master's Death, had show'd themselves so much *afraid* of suffering, that none of them had Courage enough to adhere firmly to him, at his Apprehension; can it, I say, with any Sense be imagined that these Men should be so much *in Love* with suffering *after* his Death, as to *die* in Confirmation of their Reports, concerning his rising from the Dead, if so be they had not *full* Proof that he arose from the Dead? The Man must be very foolishly credulous, that can entertain such a Thought as this.

And thus I have done with the third and last Thing propos'd, which was to shew, that those who related the Resurrection of CHRIST, were Persons of unquestionable Fidelity. I might indeed prove it by several other Arguments: Such is the amazing Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, after CHRIST's Ascension: The astonishing Miracles which they

they every where wrought, to convince Men of the Truth of their Doctrine: And the wonderful Progress it presently made, notwithstanding its Opposition to the Religions already in the World, to the Humours and Prejudices of Men, who endeavoured to suppress it, and the Prepossessions, and all the secular Interests of those who would receive it. These I say might be brought in upon this Head, with great clearness and strength of Reason; but that I think, those already alledg'd will upon a suitable Reflection, be found so very Cogent, as to supersede the Necessity of doing it.*

Well then, since 'tis past Dispute, that the Resurrection of CHRIST is clearly related in the Scriptures: Since 'tis evident, that those who related this were Persons of unquestionable Knowledge, or were thoroughly informed of, and perfectly knew the matter of Fact which they related: And since 'tis more-over evident, that they were honest and faithful in the Relation of it; the Truth of my Text is therefore fully made out, to wit, that *God hath raised up JESUS from the Dead, whereof the Apostles were sufficient Witnesses.*

* I shall now briefly consider what good Use

Use may be made of this Doctrine; and so conclude.

And *First*, it appeareth from hence, that the Debt which the whole Race of Mankind had contracted by Sin, is fully discharged; or that CHRIST by his Death, made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of all the World. The Sin of *Adam* derived a Guilt upon all his Posterity; which Guilt was an Obligation to endure a Punishment proportionable to that Offence. But CHRIST freely undertook to cancel this Obligation himself by offering to suffer in our stead; and this he fulfilled by cloathing himself with Humanity, and dying upon the Cross: For God sending his own Son in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, for Sin, condemned Sin in the Flesh. CHRIST therefore being our Bonds-man, and suffering Death upon our Account; God by *loosing the Bands of Death*, and releasing him from the Prison of the Grave, did thereby openly absolve and acquit him from the Obligation with which he had bound himself, and manifestly declare, that his Sufferings were a full Satisfaction to Divine Justice: and that not only for *original* Guilt, but also for *actual* Sins. * For as the Apostle says,

Romans

Romans v. 16. The Judgment was by one, that is, one Sin to Condemnation; but the Free-gift is of many Offences to Justification.

Secondly, The Resurrection of CHRIST doth likewise manifest the Truth and Divinity of his Religion, and prove him to be that Prophet which was to come into the World. When CHRIST drove out of the Temple those that sold Oxen, and Sheep, and Doves, and the Changers of Money, and the like, the Jews asked him, saying, What Signs shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou dost these Things? And he answering, said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up; this he spake concerning the Temple of his Body. Now if we look into Deuteronomy xviii. 22. and Jeremiah xxviii. 9. we shall find, that the Test which God prescrib'd, whereby to discover a true Prophet from a false one, was the Accomplishment of Predictions: Being therefore, CHRIST foretold his rising from the Dead within three Days; and being he did raise himself from the Dead in that Space of Time, after he was put to Death for calling himself the Son of God; it plainly follows from hence that he really was so; and if he really was so, then the Religion

gion which he instituted must be true and Divine

Thirdly, The Resurrection of CHRIST confirmeth us in the Hope and Expectation of our *own* Resurrection. CHRIST by rising from the Dead *became the First-fruits of them that slept*: And there can be no surer Pledge of *the Harvest* which shall be *in the End of the World*, than that the *First-fruits* of it are already offer'd: No surer Token that *we* who are the Members of CHRIST shall rise at the Last-day, than that CHRIST our Head is already risen, by our Baptism we become united to CHRIST; by being united to CHRIST *we become Partakers of God's Holy Spirit; and if the Spirit of him that raised up CHRIST from the Dead dwell in us, then he that raised up CHRIST from the Dead, shall also quicken our mortal Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.*

Farthermore, CHRIST by rising from the Dead, destroy'd the Power of Death, and gain'd an entire Victory over the Grave: Hereby he got Possession of *the Keys of Death*, and so hath Power to deliver from its Prisons all those that are holden of it: And as certainly as he *hath* this Power, so certainly will he put it in Execution; for

as in Adam all die, so in and by the Power of CHRIST shall all be made alive.

Fourthly, therefore and Lastly, The Resurrection of CHRIST should make us rise from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness. To this Purpose St. Paul speaks in the sixth Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, at the fourth Verse; Like as CHRIST was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life. Since by the Resurrection of CHRIST an Assurance is given to us of our own Resurrection, we must live agreeable to our Holy Profession, otherwise our Resurrection will only complete our Misery. If we would have our Bodies raised to Glory hereafter, we must not abuse them in any thing base and shameful here; and we must mortify our Members, and not over-indulge in the empty fleeting Pleasures that are upon Earth; if we would live in that fulness of Joy, and those everlasting Pleasures which are at God's Right-Hand in Heaven.

Let us therefore not suffer Sin to reign in our mortal Bodies; but let us yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the Dead, and our Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God. Let us

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put

*put away from us Fornication, Unclean-
ness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupi-
scence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry,
Anger, Wrath, Malice, and Uncharitable-
ness, and all other Sins whatsoever; and
let us live in the sincere and constant Per-
formance of all the Duties that are en-
joyn'd us; and then when CHRIST
shall appear, he shall change our vile Bo-
dies, that they may be fashion'd like unto
his own glorious Body, according to the
mighty Workings, whereby he is able to sub-
due all Things to himself.*

SERMON iii.

Acts ii. 33.

*Therefore being by the Right-Hand of
God exalted, and having received of
the Father the Promise of the Holy
Ghost, he hath shed for this, which ye
now see, and hear.*

THESE Words are Part of a Ser-
mon preach'd by St. Peter, upon
that

that astonishing Descent of the Holy Ghost; which the Church doth on *this* Day commemorate.

The Persons upon whom this Descent was made, were the Apostles of the blessed JESUS, Men whom he chose out of the World to be the Objects of his extraordinary Love and Kindness: Men whom he employ'd in the honourable, yet difficult and laborious Office, of planting his Religion, and publishing the *glad Tydings of Salvation*.

But notwithstanding these Privileges and Advantages which they enjoy'd above the rest of the Sons of *Adam*; they were very ignorant, and unlearned, and exceedingly remarkable for the Dulness of their Understanding: So that it was highly Necessary to give them a great Measure of Divine Assistance, whereby they might be qualified for the Discharge of that weighty Trust which was committed unto them. Our Saviour therefore who very well knew the Necessity of such a supernatural Aid promised to bestow the same upon them. This he did a little before his Crucifixion; and again after that, before his Ascension. For perceiving that they were mightily troubled and cast

• Preached on *Whitsunday*.

down, at the Thoughts of his Departure; to cheer their fainting Hearts, and revive their drooping Spirits, he told them that *he would send them another Comforter, even the Holy Ghost*; who should enable them to finish the Work which he gave them to do; and furnish them with Strength sufficient to conquer whatsoever Opposition they might meet with.

And as our Saviour made this Promise to his Apostles, during the Time of his Abode upon Earth; so he commanded them *to tarry at Jerusalem* until he had fulfilled it. Accordingly we find that they waited there in Expectation of it: And *when the Day of Pentecost was fully come; as they were all assembled together, suddenly there came from Heaven a Sound, as of a rushing mighty Wind; which filled all the House where they were sitting: And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and sat upon each of them:*

2:4 *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them Utterance.* So it came to pass, that those unpolish'd Mortals, who were utterly unacquainted with Learning and Languages, could on a sudden talk what Language they pleas'd; and they who were not like-
ly

ly to make any Profelytes by the Charms of persuasive Eloquence, could convert whole Nations by the over-powering *Demonstration of the Spirit.*

This was a Miracle strangely surprizing indeed, and might well raise the Admiration of the Multitude which heard and saw it: It was wrought at a Time when *Jerusalem* was filled with *Jews out of every Nation under Heaven; and every Man heard the Apostles spake in his own Language the wonderful Works of God: And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Other mocking, said, These Men are full of new Wine.* Hereupon St. Peter stood up, and refuted the frivolous Cavil of those silly Gainsayers, and gave a rational Account of the Thing which had happen'd. 1243

He shew'd, that *JESUS of Nazareth* who had been crucified, dead, and buried, was *the the CHRIST of God; who raised him up from the dead; and exalted him by his Right Hand; whereby he receiv'd Power to shed forth that extraordinary Gift of the Holy Ghost, which then struck them with so much Wonder and Amazement.*

With Relation to this it is, that he speaks in my Text, and the Verse immediately before it, *This JESUS*, says he, *hath God raised up, whereof we are all Witnesses*: And then he goes on; *Therefore being by the Right Hand of God exalted, and having receiv'd of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear*.

In discoursing from which Words, I shall consider,

First of all, The Exaltation of CHRIST.

Secondly, The Descent of the Holy Ghost after CHRIST's Exaltation. And

Thirdly, The Behaviour of the Apostles after this Descent upon them.

First then, I am to consider the Exaltation of CHRIST by Way of Introduction, to which, it may not be amiss to look back a little upon his Humiliation. When our First Parents had broken the Covenant which God made with them, and by so doing, render'd themselves, and all their Posterity, liable to the sad Effects of his everlasting Displeasure; the eternal Son of God, who was the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person; He, I say, out of his boundless Love, and inexpressible Good-will towards Mankind,

kind, freely undertook to deliver them from that dreadful Obligation wherein they were involv'd; and to put them in away to attain that never ending Happiness, of the Title to which they were by their own Folly depriv'd. In order to accomplish this vast Design, he vouchsafed to strip himself of his heavenly Honours, and veil his Divinity with Flesh and Blood. *Though he was in the Form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he took upon him the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeness of Man:* By the Union of whose Nature to his own Divine Nature, he became both God and Man, and so one CHRIST. And as he took our Nature upon him, so he Did, and Suffer'd in it, all that was necessary to appease incensed Justice: He was continually busied in promoting both our Temporal and Spiritual Welfare; for which he bore abundance of Hardship; and at last endured a most painful, accursed, and inglorious Death.

Now as a Reward for such his stupendous Humanity and Condescension, as a Recompence for what he Did, and Suffer'd for the Sons of Men; *God hath also highly Exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name.*

And

And this Exaltation of CHRIST consisteth, in the Possession of certain peculiar Powers and Priviledges, from whence the highest Glory is reflected upon his human Nature. He enter'd upon the Execution, and Enjoyment of these, presently after his Death: For when his Body had been for some Time in the Grave, before it saw Corruption, he restored it again to Life: *As he was put to Death in the Flesh,* so he was soon after *Quicken'd by the Spirit*, that is, by the Power of his own Godhead; by Virtue whereof he did reunite unto his Soul, the same Body which died and was buried, retaining all its essential Properties, yet eternally separated from Mortality, and all other Infirmities whatsoever. So that what was subject to Death, was plac'd beyond the Possibility of it. What was liable to Pain and Weariness, became utterly incapable of any such Sensation. What required the Refreshments of Meat, Drink, and Sleep, was entirely freed from wanting the Use of those Supports. And what was a natural Body, fitted for a Pilgrimage here on Earth, was purified, and spiritualiz'd into a Capacity of inheriting *the Kingdom of Heaven*, into which *Flesh and Blood*, in its natural, unrefin'd State, *cannot Enter*. Thus was the

Body.

Body of CHRIST Exalted from the lowly Condition, it underwent for our Sakes, and fashioned into a more Glorious Frame than ever it was before. Thus was his Soul brought back from the *unseen* Regions, and joyn'd again to it, never more to suffer another Separation. And thus was all his Doctrine most *illustriously* Confirm'd; and *he himself declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by his Resurrection from the Dead.*

And as CHRIST was highly Exalted in his Resurrection from the Dead; so likewise in his Ascension into Heaven. After he had disarmed Death of its Sting, and overcome the King of Terrors, *he ascended up on high, and led Captivity Captive.* By a true and local Translation, he convey'd himself from the Earth on which he lived, through all the Regions of the Air, through all the Celestial Orbs, until he came unto the Heaven of Heavens, the most glorious Presence of the Divine Majesty. This was a noble Inauguration to the perfect Execution of his Kingly Office: And then it might properly have been Sung; *Lift up your Heads, O ye Gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.*
The

The Heaven of Heavens did Open and Receive his humane Nature, which was presently *set down at the right Hand of God, far above all Principality, and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come.*

* And this sitting of CHRIST at God's right Hand, is another Priviledge wherein his Exaltation consisteth. We must not however understand the Phrase, of sitting at God's right Hand, strictly and literally, but in a loose and metaphorical Sense: For whereas God is a Spirit he can have no bodily Parts, and consequently no Hands at all. But the right Hand of God, signifies the Seat of immense Power, Happiness, and Glory; and because CHRIST in his human Nature, is exalted above all created Beings, to be *immediately next* unto God himself in Power, Happiness, and Glory, therefore he is said to sit at God's right Hand. Not as if he was confin'd to any particular Posture, for sitting only implies his being unchangeably fix'd in the Possession of that Glory, Happiness, and Power, which upon account of his Death and Sufferings, are conferred upon him.

Lastly,



Lastly, Another Part of CHRIST's Exaltation, is his coming to Judge the World at the last Day. Though the Power of Judging is common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet the Execution of this Power belongs to the Son alone; forasmuch as he alone stooped so low, as to Assume our Nature. Thus he tells us himself, that *the Father hath given him Authority to execute Judgment, because he is the Son of Man*; that is, because he alone is the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. He alone of the three Persons which by God was judg'd, and condemn'd by Man, and therefore he alone shall Judge, and respectively Condemn and Absolve Men at the last Day; when he shall appear in his human glorified Body, attended and waited upon by all the Angels of Heaven. After this^d, *he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father*; by which may be meant, that his Mediatorial Kingdom, or his Office of Mediator shall be at an End, together with those Powers that relate to it: Nevertheless, the Powers and Priviledges which are due either upon the Union of the human Nature with the Divine, or in Compensation of the Afflictions un-

^c John v. 27.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 24.

dergone *in* that Nature, shall continue as long as that Union it self, namely, for ever and ever.

In the mean while the Power which he exerciseth, with regard to that Part of his Church which is upon the Earth, consisteth in ruling it, by the standing Revelation of his Will; in making Intercession for it; and protecting it from the Malice of all its Enemies. He gives the several Members of it, his holy Spirit to enable them to perform their Duty, and to resist the Temptations which would hinder them *from* it; This he doth in an ordinary Measure, and in an ordinary Way; to wit, by our using Prayer, his Word, and the Sacraments: These are the Means of obtaining Grace at Present; and by these we are strengthen'd in the Hopes of future Glory.

As for those *extraordinary* Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were bestowed upon the Apostles, 'tis very plain that we have them *not*, and therefore as plain that they are not necessary. After Christianity was planted in the World, the End was gained for which those extraordinary Gifts were bestowed, and when the End was gained, the Means conducing to it, ceas'd of course. Indeed, 'twas highly necessary, that

that the first Propagators of CHRIST's Religion, should have an uncommon Degree of his Spirit: *They* were to encounter the Prejudice, and Spight of Jews and Gentiles; and a vast many more Difficulties; and therefore 'twas absolutely requisite that they should be indued with proportionable Strength and Ability. And so we find that they were: For the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, in a most wonderful and unheard of manner; by whose Help they soon carried the joyful *Sound of the Gospel into all Lands*, and brought Salvation *unto the Ends of the World*. And this brings me to the

Second Thing propounded, namely, To consider the Descent of the Holy Ghost after CHRIST's Exaltation. ✂ This Expression, HOLY GHOST, doth frequently signify in the Scriptures, nothing else but the Gifts and Graces that he confers upon any one; which are called Holy Ghost, by a Figure, by which the Cause of a Thing is put for the Thing it self. By the descending therefore, or shedding forth of the Holy Ghost upon any Persons, we are to understand that there is communicated unto them a Share of his Favour or Blessing. ✂ Of which an *extraordinary* Degree was poured upon the

F Apostles

Apostles in a very strange and surprizing Manner. And this might be called, *the Promise of the Holy Ghost*, both upon account of the Prediction in *Joel*, mentioned by *St. Peter* at the 16th, and 17th, and some following Verses of this Chapter; *It shall come to pass in the last Days, (saith God) I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, &c.* And also because our Saviour several Times promised it his Apostles whilst he convers'd with them upon Earth. Thus in *John xv. 25. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth.* And so likewise at the 7th Verse of the xvith Chapter; *It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* These Promises were made before his Death: And they were again repeated after his Resurrection.

Thus *St. Luke* informs us, in the last Chapter of his Gospel, that he spake after this Manner; *Behold, I send the Promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the City of Jerusalem, until ye be indued with Power from on high.* And to the same Purpose we are told, in the first Chapter of his *Acts of the Apostles*; that
he

be commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father, which (saith he) ye have heard of me: For John truly baptiz'd with Water, but ye shall be baptiz'd with the Holy Ghost not many Days hence. † Upon either or both of these Accounts might the Baptism with the Holy Ghost, or the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, be called the *Promise of it.* †

Now of the fulfilling of this Promise to the Apostles, we have a large Account in this Chapter out of which my Text is taken. *As they were all with one Accord in one Place, suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting.* The suddenness of this Sound, its impetuous, violent rushing, and its filling all the House, very properly represented the wonderful Power and Force of that Holy Spirit, which bore down the Opposition Christianity met with in its Infancy, and quickly gave it a very great Footing in all Parts of the World.

To proceed; We are told that *Cloven Tongues appear'd to them, like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them; And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and*
F 2
began

began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance: Thus they were qualified to talk whatsoever Language they had Occasion to make Use of in propagating the Christian Faith. This Variety of Languages which they were qualified to talk, might be denoted by the *Form* in which the Tongues appeared; for they appeared *Cloven* or divided.

Their appearing *like as of Fire*, might be a Token of that Warmth and Vigour, wherewith the Apostles should preach the Doctrine of JESUS CHRIST; and also of the powerful Conviction following their Discourses; which had a Force over considerate thinking Men, like as Fire over combustible Matter, which it brings into the same Condition with it self.

Again, These Tongues coming upon *each* of them, shew'd that they were *all* endued with the like Gift; and their *sitting* upon them might signify, that this Gift was to *rest* upon them, or that they should constantly enjoy the Use of those Languages, which were necessary in order to the making Disciples in all the Nations over which they should travel.

* And as the Descent of the Holy Ghost enabled the Apostles to impart the Divine Mysteries to *others*, so it brought the
Know-

Knowledge of all necessary Doctrines to *themselves*. THIS indeed was but previous to THAT; it being impossible for any one to inform *another* of what he *himself* is ignorant. And therefore though the Apostles had lived a very considerable Time under the Ministry of our Saviour himself, and had heard the Doctrines of the Gospel Dispensation from his own Mouth; yet he, knowing the Weakness and Dullness of their Capacities, judged it requisite, that, after his Departure, the Holy Ghost should refresh their Memories, and enlighten their Understandings, with a clear Knowledge of those Points, they might forget, or not rightly apprehend. Agreeably hereunto, he speaks to them in *John* xiv. 26. *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* And again, in *John* xvi. 12. 13. *I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth.*

Neither were these I have already mentioned the only Benefits redounding to the Apostles from the Descent of the Holy Ghost

Ghost, but they received likewise the ~~Power of working Miracles.~~ Thus at the 43d Verse of the Chapter before us, we read, that *many Wonders and Signs were done by the Apostles.* And several of these are recorded in this Book of their Acts; such as communicating the Holy Ghost to others; driving unclean Spirits out of those who were vexed with them; giving Soundness of Limbs to Men that were born Cripples: restoring the Dead to Life; striking Offenders dead; and the like.

Thus by the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Apostles were enrich'd with a Treasure of heavenly Doctrines: They were capacitated to deliver them to Men of any Nation whatsoever: And could work Miracles to convince those to whom they delivered them, of their Truth and Certainty.

And as these extraordinary *Talents* and Privileges were given to the Apostles of our Lord; so they did not *bury* them, or permit them to lye by neglected; but employ'd them according to the Design of him by whom they were given. Which leads me to the last Head of Discourse, to wit, the Behaviour of the Apostles after the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. But this I shall reserve to another Opportunity.

SERMON iv.

Acts ii. 33.

Therefore being by the Right Hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see, and hear.

IN my foregoing Discourse from these Words, I proposed to consider these three Things.

First, The Exaltation of CHRIST.

Secondly, The Descent of the Holy Ghost after CHRIST's Exaltation. And

Thirdly, The Behaviour of the Apostles after this Descent upon them.

Under the *First* of these Heads I shew-
ed; That the Exaltation of CHRIST con-
sisted in the Enjoyment of that Power,
Happiness, and Glory, to which his hu-
man Nature was advanced by his Resur-
rection from the Dead; by his Ascension
into

into Heaven; by his sitting at the Right Hand of God; and by his being appointed Judge of the whole World.

Under the *Second* of them, I shew'd; that, by the Descent of the Holy Ghost after CHRIST's Exaltation, the Apostles were furnished with a true Knowledge of all Points relating to the Salvation of Mankind, which were necessary to be revealed to them: That they were likewise endow'd with the Gift of Languages, whereby they could deliver them to People of any *Nation under Heaven*: And could also perform miraculous Works in Confirmation of the Truth of what they deliver'd.

It remains now, that I proceed to the *Third* Thing propos'd; namely, To consider the Behaviour of the Apostles after this Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them.

From hence we may see, that the World has been mightily beholden to this Descent of the Holy Ghost ever since: And that the Virtue of those extraordinary Gifts at first communicated to the Apostles, teaches in a high Degree to all succeeding Ages. For those extraordinary Gifts were not bestowed upon the Apostles for the Advantage of *Themselves* only, but

but for the good of *Mankind in general*. They were appointed by CHRIST to plant his Religion in the World, whereby Men should become acquainted with the Terms of Salvation; and be directed in the sure Way to everlasting Happiness. This was the Office they were call'd to: And 'twas for the effectual Discharge hereof that they were so wonderfully *endu'd with Power from on High*. Which when receiv'd, they presently set about their important Business; and in the Prosecution of it we may take notice;

First, That they behaved themselves with the greatest Courage. This appears from their undaunted Boldness in preaching the Gospel of a crucified Saviour; and from their Patience under the Sufferings they endur'd upon that Account. Tho' they foresaw that *they should be bated of all Men for the Sake of CHRIST; that they should be scourged in the Synagogues; and cast out of 'em; that they should be brought before Magistrates; and that those who killed them, should think they did God Service*; yet they openly maintain'd the Cause of their Master, even in that very City at which he was murder'd: And even in the Presence of those very Men, and Magistrates, who had but lately embru'd
their

their Hands in his Blood. They declared to them, that *God had raised up JESUS from the Dead, whom they had slaid, and hanged on a Tree; that he was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; and that there was none other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved.* This Freedom of the Apostles, no doubt, enrag'd the High-Priest, and Elders, and the rest of the Council, to a very high Degree: *And they commanded them not to Speak at all, nor Teach in the Name of JESUS.* But with what a noble Air of Greatness were they answered upon this Head! *Whether it be right in the Sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye: For we cannot but speak the Things which we have seen, and heard.*

After this, when they were a second Time brought before the same Council, and sharply reprimanded for not obeying its Orders; they reply'd in the same fearless Manner as they had done before; *we ought to obey God rather than Man.* And though they were then beaten, and again forbidden to speak in the Name of JESUS; yet instead of being terrified, or discouraged by such Usage, *they departed from the Presence of the Council, rejoicing that*

they

5. Act 41-42

they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for his Name: And daily in the Temple, and in every Hou'e, they ceased not to teach and preach JESUS CHRIST. With such an undaunted Boldness did the Apostles begin the Work of the Ministry, in a Place inhabited by its bitterest Enemies: With such unshaken Constancy did they persist therein, notwithstanding the Punishment inflicted on them for it.

And when through the Course of their Ministry, in other Parts of the Earth, they experienced the Malice of their Enemies in a far greater Degree; when they were *made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things*; when they came to suffer Revilings, Buffetings, and Death it self, in the Cause of CHRIST; their Patience still shone out with a triumphant Brightness, and spread an uncommon Glory round about them: They were afraid of no temporal Punishment *having a Respect unto the Recompence of eternal Reward*; but courageously bore any Misery or Sorrow, which they met with in *this Life*, for the Joy that was set before them in the *Next*.

Secondly, The Apostles behaved themselves with the greatest Fidelity. As they were in a most eminent Degree, *Ministers*
of

of *CHRIST*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*; so they faithfully dispens'd those Mysteries to the World, and carefully instructed Mankind in the Belief of them. They made it their Business to acquaint their Hearers with the whole Will of God, without adding any Thing to it, for the Advancement of their own Interest or Power.

They did not promise Men that their *Sins shall be blotted out*, upon easier Terms than Repentance, and Conversion: Neither to those who repented, and forsook their Sins, did they deny the Hopes of Mercy.

X They pretended not to grant any Indulgence to countenance their Converts, in the Transgression of God's Laws; because they were thoroughly persuaded, that he would never confirm such a Licence: Neither did they offer to set Pardons to Sale; because they well knew that those being *the free Gift of God, could not be purchased with Money*.

They invented no such Bugbear as Purgatory, where the Souls of true Believers, should undergo Pains like those of Hell, till the Debt of temporal Punishment, which they ow'd, and had not paid in this Life should be clear'd off; because
they

they rightly Believed that such would be exempted from all kind of Pain after Death, upon account of the Sufferings their Redeemer endured: Neither did they teach it as a Place, wherein they should be purified from any Pollution, they might contract upon Earth; because they were fully assured that *the Blood of CHRIST* was sufficient to cleanse them from all Defilement.

They did not affirm, that his Body was present in the Sacrament of his Supper; because they had learnt, that *the Heavens must contain that until the Restitution of all Things*; and could not imagine, that any Thing so absur'd as Transubstantiation, ought to be delivered for a Truth: Neither did they presume to cut a sunder, (or rather destroy) that Sacrament, by denying the Cup to the People; because they were sensible that from the original Institution, they had as good a Title to the Wine, as to the Bread.

They truly understood that *God* only should be worshipped; and that there was but *one Mediator between God and Man, who gave himself a Ransom for All*; and therefore they never directed Men to the Adoration of Reliques, and Images; or to the Invocation of Angels, and Saints.

These, and Doctrines of the like Stamp they received no Orders to publish: They had been unfaithful to their Commission, if they had publish'd them: But they nowhere attempted to impose such Points upon Men's Belief, and Practice. For *they were not as many who corrupt the Word of God; who debauch and mingle it with their own Fancies; but as of Sincerity, but as of God, in the Sight of God spake they in CHRIST.* Thus by keeping back nothing that was necessary to be known; and by revealing nothing for God's Will, but what ought to be received as such; the Apostles discharged their Office with the greatest Fidelity, and left a safe Rule for us to walk by, in order to attain everlasting Happiness.

X 3. *Lastly,* They behaved themselves with the most fervent Zeal. They *contended earnestly for the Faith which was delivered unto them* to propagate; and put forth their utmost Diligence and Power to spread it all over the World. What painful Journeys did they take? travelling up and down from one City to another; To *Jews and Gentiles*; to the Wise, and to the Unwise; to Countries that were near, and to Countries that were far distant; and all this, that *the everlasting Gospel might be*

be preached to every Nation, and Kindred, and Tongue, and People?

But though they had such an hearty Concern to make known the Religion of CHRIST to all Mankind; though they had such a mighty Zeal as to be continually compassing Sea and Land to gain *Profelytes* to it; yet they never used violent Methods to force Men to embrace it. They had no Racks, nor Fires; they had no Courts of Inquisition, nor Troops of Dragoons; nor any other Instruments of Cruelty, wherewith to destroy or torment those who would not come over to them: No, their Zeal was accompanied with Meekness, Longsuffering, and Forbearance: They laboured to convince Men's *Understandings* of the Truth of the Gospel in a *fair and reasonable Way*: *Herein* they were indefatigably industrious; and by being so, together with their holy Living; their Constancy in suffering; their Patience in dying for the Sake of it; and above all, by *the Power of God working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following*; they brought People to be *in Love* with *the Beauty* of the Christian Dispensation; and it had such a wonderful and amazing Success, that before the Destruction of *Jerusalem* (which hap-

about forty Years after our Saviour's Crucifixion) it was received by great Numbers in all Parts of the then known World.

After this manner was the Church of CHRIST *at first* planted in the Earth. And so *effectually* was it done by *these* Means; that by the Blessing of Heaven, it has continued from that Time to this; and so it shall continue throughout all succeeding Generations: Our Saviour having promised to be with *it always even unto the End of the World; and that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

And from *hence* we may see, how great a Benefit Men receive from the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, throughout every Age from the Time in which it happened; and consequently what abundant Cause there is for their hearty Thanksgivings to Almighty God upon that Account. For 'twas the Holy Ghost which enlighten'd the Apostles with the Knowledge of all necessary Truths: 'Twas the Holy Ghost which furnished them with the Faculty of speaking all Languages: Which attended them with the Power of Miracles: Which inspired them with Courage, Fidelity, and Zeal in the Discharge of their Office: In short, which enabled them to establish the Religion

ligion of CHRIST in the World. Those therefore upon whom the Light of the glorious Gospel shineth, must needs be vastly indebted to THAT for the Happiness and Advantage they enjoy thereby.*

And thus I have gone over the LAST Head of Discourse at first laid down; which was to consider the Behaviour of the Apostles after the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. I shall now make some suitable Reflections, or Observations from what has been deliver'd from this Passage of Scripture before us, and then conclude. And

First, From the Exaltation of CHRIST's human Nature which undeservedly met with a great deal of bitter and shameful Usage, we may Observe, that God hath a peculiar Regard to, and a proportionable Reward for afflicted Innocence, and distressed Virtue. A Reflection *this*, which, if duly weigh'd, may be a Spring of Patience and Consolation under all the Calamities which the sincere Practice of our Duty, or the stedfast Adherence to our Religion may at any Time bring upon us. For as CHRIST JESUS who was for a little while made lower than the Angels, for the Sufferings he underwent, is now crown'd with Happiness and Glo-

ry; so if the Sufferings of CHRIST abound in us, our Consolation also may abound in CHRIST. If we tread in the Steps of our great Master, and follow the Captain of our Salvation, gloriously conquering the Powers of Hell and Darkness; we shall at length partake of the same Happiness and Honour which are already bestowed upon him: For this we have his own Promise, Rev. iii. 21. *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne.* And to the same Purpose speaks St. Paul in 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. *It is a faithful Saying; for if we be dead with him, we shall live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* Whenever therefore it is our Lot to meet with injurious Treatment, or to be any ways afflicted for the Sake of a good Conscience; that we may be armed with Patience and Comfort, let us call to mind the Sufferings our Redeemer underwent; the Rewards which followed them, and which we shall receive, if we wrongfully suffer as he did. Let us look unto JESUS the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endur'd the Cross, despising the Shame; but is now set down

at

at the right Hand of the Throne of God;
and will place us so much the nearer to
himself, by how much the deeper we have
drunk of that bitter Cup which he drank
of in the Days of his Humiliation. ✕

Secondly, From what hath been said
concerning the wonderful Descent of the
Holy Ghost after CHRIST's Exaltation,
we may observe, what sort of Evidence
may be justly demanded of those Persons,
who shall teach any Doctrine in Religion,
as a Revelation from God, besides what is
contained in the Holy Scriptures: We
may observe, I say, what Evidence they
ought to produce to prove their Autho-
rity to teach such a Doctrine, and our
Obligation to receive the same; namely,
the Evidence of miraculous Works.

When the Apostles by the coming of
the Holy Ghost upon them, were fully
Qualified to spread abroad the Revela-
tion of the Gospel, we have seen that they
had *this* Evidence to confirm the Truth
of their Doctrine, and Divinity of their
Mission: And if ever it should please Al-
mighty God to make farther Discoveries
of his Will to us, by the Inspiration of
others; there's the greatest Reason in the
World to expect, that he will enable them
to prove the reality of such Inspiration, af-
ter

ter the same Manner as the Apostles did.

For if we are obliged to believe any Doctrine, as a Revelation from God, without such Proof as this, then we must believe it, upon the *bare Word* of those, who pretend they are inspired from Heaven to reveal it to us : But if we must believe in such a Case, upon their *bare Word*, what can hinder us from being imposed upon by any deluded, or designing Persons, who shall boldly affirm that they are appointed by God to discover *more* of his Will to the World? What can preserve us from embracing Falshood for Truth, and swallowing down the Fancies of a distemper'd Brain for Inspiration?

We are exhorted in the Scriptures *not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits, whether they are of God*: The meaning of which Exhortation is plainly this; that we should not believe any Doctrine which another teaches for the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, or for a Revelation from God, before we have try'd, and found it so to be. Now which way is this Tryal to be made, but by examining whether it is proved from the Scriptures, or by Miracles? If such a Doctrine is not contained in the Scriptures, 'tis certain it cannot be proved from *them* : It remains therefore
 now to

to be proved by Miracles ; otherwise it has no better Evidence than *the confident Affirmation* of those, who teach it ; but *this* ought not to be valu'd at all, upon account of the bad Consequence of it ; and also because we are expressly required *not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits whether they are of God.*

I would not be understood here, as if I thought that Miracles were sufficient to prove the Divinity of *any* Doctrine whatsoever ; for there may be some Doctrines, which Miracles themselves can never establish the Truth of. Such are those which be notoriously inconsistent with the infinite Purity, Justice, Goodness, or any other Attribute of the Divine Nature. Such are those which promote Idolatry, by teaching us to worship Images, Saints, Angels, and the like. Such as destroy the Evidence of our Senses ; and in short, such as manifestly contradict any former Revelation of God's Will.

Doctrines of *this* Kind can never be reveal'd by the Holy Spirit ; because 'tis impossible for the Holy Spirit, to be guilty of Self-contradiction ; or to bid us disbelieve our Senses, or to direct us to worship any other Object but God Almighty ; or to authorize any Thing that clashes
with

with the Divine Perfections. So that if any wonderful Works should be wrought, for the Credit of such Doctrines, instead of believing them upon that account, we ought to look upon such Works, as the juggling Contrivances of designing Men, or the Delusions of evil Spirits. Agreeable whereunto is the Caution given by Moses to the Israelites, Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. *If there ariseth among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign, or a Wonder; and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee; saying, let us go after other Gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them. Thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God, with all your Heart and with all your Soul.*

When therefore I say, that any Doctrine which is taught as a Revelation from God, besides what is contained in the Scriptures, must be proved by Miracles; I speak of such Doctrines as are the Reverse of those I just now mentioned. As for *those*, they are incapable of being confirm'd by Miracles: As for *these*, they *must* be so confirmed before we embrace them;

them; because we are to esteem nothing as a fresh Revelation of the Will and Pleasure of *the King of Kings*, but what has, in this manner, had *the Stamp* of Omnipotence, and *passed the Broad Seal*, of Heavenly ~~Authority~~ *Power*.

Thirdly, From what hath been said concerning the Behaviour of the Apostles, after the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; we may observe, that the Strength of unassisted Nature is mightily exceeded by the Efficacy of Divine Grace. *Before* the Apostles received *this*, they were exceedingly Fearful, Wavering, and Lukewarm: *After* they received it, they were as eminent for their Courage, Fidelity, and Zeal. When they were *without the Aid from Above, and Power from on High*; they were very much afraid of the Dangers and Afflictions, which the Profession of a new Religion would expose them to: But when they were endued with it, none of those Things moved them; neither did they count their Lives so dear unto themselves, as that they might finish their Course with Joy, and the Ministry which they had received of the Lord *JESUS*.

Let not therefore any Difficulties or Dangers that lie in the Way of our Christian

stian Race, daunt or dismay us; because if we be not wanting to ourselves, we shall have Power enough to surmount them all. For though we are not to expect those *extraordinary* Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were bestowed upon the Apostles; yet God will not withhold from us any Helps, that are necessary to carry us through the several Stages of our Duty; provided we make use of those Means which he hath appointed for the Conveyance of them. And they, as I observed in my last Discourse, are frequent and devout Prayer; reading his holy Word, and hearing it explain'd; and partaking of the Sacraments. *These Means therefore let us seriously and constantly make use of, and then he that will be with us, will be greater than he that is in the World; and we may do, or suffer Things through CHRIST, that will strengthen us.*

Lastly Upon the Whole, we may observe, how every Person of the sacred Trinity was concerned in bestowing those miraculous Gifts, and Graces upon the Apostles, which qualified them to preach the Gospel to all Nations.

Those Gifts, and Graces were communicated by the *immediate* Operation
of

of the Holy Ghost ; but *that* Holy Ghost was sent by the Son ; and given by the Father. *The Son being exalted at the right Hand of God, and having receiv'd from the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, sent that Holy Ghost to shed forth those Gifts and Graces.* To this sacred Trinity therefore, three Persons and one God, let our hearty Thanks be render'd, for those wonderful Gifts and Graces, wherewith the Apostles were furnished ; by the blessed Influence of which we have been brought out of Darknes and Error, into the Light of the glorious Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. And let it be our earnest Prayer that this *Light may shine upon those who still sit in Darknes, and the Shadow of Death ; that their Feet may be guided into, and both theirs and ours, always preserved in the Way of Peace.*

SERMON v.

Acts xvii. 31.

He hath appointed a Day, in the which he
H will

will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordain'd.

IT is melancholly to consider how the Practice of Christians clashes with their Profession. Some of them have made such a Progress in Wickedness, that they live as if they had quite abandon'd themselves to Impiety, Injustice, and Intemperance. Others there are who have the Semblance of Holiness to God-ward, but show very little Justice or Charity among their Neighbours; they pay some outward Regard to the Duties enjoyn'd by the *First* Table, but seem easily drawn to transgress all, or most of the Commands of the *Second*. There are a third Sort of them, who may be honest in their Dealings with Men, and well meaning in the Worship of God too; but yet their Devotions are so very careless, cold, and spiritless, that one would think they were not speaking to the infinite Majesty of Heaven; or were meer Machines not animated with any Souls. Thus sadly are we degenerated from the uniform Obedience, and fervent Devotion of the *Primitive* Christians: And to what can we ascribe this Degeneracy of Men's *Manners*, but to the Degeneracy of their *Principles*? They must either not *believe*, or not *think* of a

Judg.

Judgment to come: For 'tis hard to suppose, that they would not honestly and heartily conform to *all* God's Laws, did they believe and consider that they should be rewarded and punished hereafter, according to the Lives they have led here.

Now 'tis my Design, in discoursing from the Text which I have chosen, to convince, and put Men in mind of *this important Truth*; and from *thence* to persuade them to Amendment of Life. In prosecuting which Design, I shall endeavour in the

First Place, To prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come.

Secondly, I shall show who is appointed to execute this Judgment.

Thirdly, I shall consider some of the Circumstances of his coming to execute it.

Fourthly, I shall enquire *how* he will execute it.

Fifthly and *Lastly*, I shall make some Application from the Whole.

I begin with the *First* of these Heads, namely, to prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come. Now the Certainty of a Judgment to come, may be made evident both from Reason and Revelation.

First from Reason. The Notions that are in Men consider'd simply, as Men, concerning the Nature of Virtue and Vice, are an Argument for this Doctrine. 'Tis manifest that Men, considered simply, as Men, that is, before they have been blessed with the *external* Revelation of God's Will in his Word, have always thought that Virtue was essentially Noble and Beautiful, and that Vice was as essentially Base and Ugly. Now *that* whereby these essential Differences of Virtue and Vice were determined, and discovered by Men considered as such, must be a *Law of Nature written upon their Hearts*: And when the Gentiles, which had not the outwardly revealed Law, did by Nature the Things contained in that Law; these having not that Law were a Law unto themselves; which show'd the Work of that Law written upon their Hearts. For how should Justice, Truth, and other Virtues become the Objects of their Love and Praise? Or Dishonesty, Falshood, and other Vices, be disapproved of and condemn'd by them, unless they had Law *within* them, to which the Former were agreeable, and the Latter contrariant? From whence it follows, that as there is a supreme Being which hath impressed upon Men's Minds such

such a Law, so he will not fail to confirm the same, to discourage Transgression, and encourage Obedience, with suitable Sanctions of Punishment and Reward; because without such Sanctions 'tis unreasonable to suppose that a just Honour and Obedience should be paid to it.

And indeed the Sanctions of Punishment and Reward are known to be so necessary to the very Being, Confirmation, and Establishment of all Laws in general; that Men have ever *fear'd* the *one*, and *hop'd* for the *other*, according as they have walked *by*, or deviated *from*, *this* Law of Nature in particular. For, as it hath been frequently observed, those who have squar'd their Lives according to the Dictates of Virtue, have enjoy'd not only a present calmness and serenity of Mind, but the comfortable Expectation of future Happiness. On the other Hand; it has been no less remarkable, that wicked Men have not been able (notwithstanding all their Endeavours) rid themselves of that smiting and stinging of Conscience, that inward Horror and Dread of future Vengeance; which generally follow the most private Commission of any great Sin. Now, I'd fain know, from whence proceed the joyful Hopes, the undisturb'd Tranquility

which *good* Men have the Fruition of; and the secret Lashes, and the dreadful Apprehensions with which *wicked* Men are tortur'd, but from the Suggestions of Nature, that there will certainly be an *After-Reckoning*, when they shall be rewarded for their *Good*, and punished for their *bad* Lives.

Those Persons indeed that are unwilling to believe this Doctrine may pretend, that such pleasing Expectations, and fearful Apprehensions, are owing to *Education*; to the Stories which Men have heard from their Parents, Teachers, or Priests, whereby they meant to govern their Behaviour, and bring it in Subjection to their own Humour and Interest.

But if such Hopes and Fears had their Original from *hence*, How comes it to pass that Men can't banish them out of their Minds after they are arrived to Maturity of Years, and are capable of *thinking freely* upon the Reasons of them? The Prejudices of Education are not so great, but that Men can see the Vanity of *other* Things where-with they were flattered, or frighten'd in their Childhood, and perfectly free themselves from all Concern about them; and if the Hopes and Fears of future Rewards and Punishments had no solid Foundation

tion than the *bare Report* of others, *they* might as easily be shaken off too; but now as to *the* Things, the closer we look into them, the more impartially we consider them, the greater Reason appears for them, and the more deeply they become *engraven upon the Table of our Hearts*: And therefore they ought not to be reckon'd among the Prejudices of Education; but are rather to be ascribed to the Exercise of those Faculties of Reason which God has planted in the Soul; and which flourish and encrease according as Men cultivate and improve their Understandings.

But farther, another Argument from Reason to prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come, may be taken from the uncertain and promiscuous Dispensations of Divine Providence. 'Tis undeniably manifest, that God doth not in this Life, dispence Prosperity only to the Virtuous, and Adversity only to the Vicious: *There be just Men to whom it hapneth according to the Work of the Wicked; again, there be wicked Men to whom it hapneth according to the Work of the Righteous. The Ungodly* (as the Psalmist says) *are often seen in great Power, flourishing and spreading themselves, like green Bay-Trees;*

Trees; whilst the Piety and Honesty of others, retard and hinder their Advancement to high Places. Nay, many times, truly Religious Men, have been reduced to Poverty and Misery, only for being Religious; whilst those who have plundered and barbarously treated them, have had such abundance of the good Things of this World, as if they were rewarded for their Cruelties. Now Justice being an Attribute essentially belonging to the Divine Nature, and it belonging as essentially to distributive Justice, to render to every one according to his Deeds; 'tis plain, that since God's proceedings with Men here are quite otherwise, there must be a Judgment to come, when Rewards and Punishments, shall be properly, and suitably distributed; when a Difference shall be made, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

If to weaken the Force of this Argument, it be objected, that wicked Men are punished for their bad Actions, in that Remorse and Anguish of Soul which follows them; and that good Men are rewarded for their virtuous Actions, in that inward Pleasure and Delight wherewith they are accompanied.

It may be replied; that we may reasonably

ably suppose such inward Remorse to have its *Sting* from the Fear of Punishment; and such inward Pleasure to receive its *Strength* from the Hope of Reward, in *another* World. And if there was no Punishment to be feared in another World, upon Account of a *bad* Life; and no Reward to be expected in another World, upon Account of a *virtuous* Life; Men would not feel any Remorse or Pleasure of Mind at all, consequent upon their Behaviour; or at least, not any strong enough to restrain them at all Times from Vice, and to encourage them to a constant Perseverance in Goodness. Men by their Wickedness, frequently procure such Honours, Riches, and Pleasures, as would quickly *stifle* any Remorse of Soul, so weak as it must needs be, if there was no future Punishment to be feared; and therefore such Remorse is not a sufficient Punishment of Vice. And by a steady Adherence to Goodness, Men frequently draw upon themselves such a *Flood* of Troubles, and Persecutions, as would soon *drown* and *extinguish* any complacency of Mind, so faint as it must needs be, if there was no future Reward to be expected; and therefore such complacency is not a sufficient Reward of Virtue.

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Wherefore, since the Justice of God will most certainly inflict sufficient Punishments upon bad Men, and bestow sufficient Rewards upon those that are Good; since he does not always perform this in the present Dispensations of his Providence; we must conclude, that there will be a most *manifest Revelation of his exact Righteousness*, in a Judgment hereafter; when *those that have done Evil* shall continually groan under the Strokes of his Anger, whereof that Remorse of Soul they at present feel, is a bitter Earnest: And *those that have done Good*, shall for ever rejoyce in the Communications of his Mercy, of which that inward Tranquility they now enjoy, is a delightful Fore-runner.

Thus you may see, how strongly the Doctrine of a Judgment to come, may be proved with Arguments drawn from natural Reason: And these are moreover most irrefragably confirmed by the incontestable Authority of Divine Revelation. You see how plainly St. Paul lays it down in the Text; *He hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness.* Hear also what the same St. Paul says in the 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat*

Seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. There are abundance of Passages both in the Old and New Testament, which might be brought to prove the Doctrine we are discoursing of; but these already cited are so very plain and full, that we need not here quote any more: I shall therefore forbear doing it, and proceed to the

Second Thing proposed, namely to shew who is appointed to execute this Judgment. Now he that is appointed to execute this Judgment, is *CHRIST JESUS*, the second Person in the ever Blessed Trinity. For though every Person in the Trinity by being God, hath the same original Supreme judiciary Power; yet there is a judiciary Power delegated, derived, and given by Commission, which is *proper* and *peculiar* to *CHRIST*, as Man; whereby he shall put in Execution that judiciary Power, which he, as God, enjoys together with the Father and the Holy Ghost: So that the Person who is to judge, is the Man *CHRIST JESUS*; the Power or Principal by which he Judges, is the whole fullness of the God-head, inseparably united to his human Nature. The
Father

Father therefore, and the Holy Ghost, shall actually judge the World no otherwise but by CHRIST. According to this, St. Paul in the Place last quoted, says that *we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of CHRIST*. And Jo. v. 22. CHRIST saith, that *the Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son*; at the 27th of the same Chapter, he saith, that *Authority is given him to execute Judgment, because he is the Son of Man*: that is, as a learned Expofitor interprets it ^d, because of the three Persons which are God, he only is also the Son of Man: Because *he* only divested himself of his Glory; because *he* only condescended to take our Nature upon him; to be *touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*; and at last, to be judged and condemned, at an earthly Tribunal; therefore the Father, and the Holy Ghost who are only God, and never took upon them the Nature either of Men or Angels, have thus *highly exalted him*, and commissioned him to execute Judgment. In those Places of Scripture, where 'tis said the Saints shall judge the World, or the like; It may be meant that when they have been acquainted themselves, they shall sit

^d Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Art. VII.

as Assessors, and approve the Sentence which CHRIST shall pronounce against the wicked. CHRIST JESUS then, the Son of God, and the Son of Man; He was born of the Virgin *Mary*; He who suffered under *Pontius Pilate*; Who was crucified, dead, and buried, and descended into Hell; He who rose again from the Dead; ascended into Heaven, and now sitteth at the Right-Hand of God the Father Almighty; He it is that is appointed to come to judge the Quick and Dead.

Some of the Circumstances of his coming to Judgment are in the next Place to be considered.

First then, His coming shall be with surprizing Suddenness. We are often told in the Scripture, that he shall come *as a Thief in the Night*; CHRIST himself compareth it, to the sudden Flashes of *Lightning*; to the Deluge *in the Days of Noah*; to a *Cry made at Midnight when they all slumber'd and slept*. When Men shall be drudging for the Devil, wallowing in their sensual Pleasures, squandering away their Time *in Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness*; then shall their Jollity be dashed in a Moment, by the fearful Sights, and affrighting Prodigies, which shall usher in the Judge at his appearing:

pearing: *When they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction shall come upon them: Then shall they send forth dismal Shrieks from every Quarter; be terrified with the dreadful quaking of the Earth, and the Flames of the whole World burning about their Ears. In fine, when Men shall be abusing their Prosperity and Abundance, by making it subservient to their Vices; when they shall be employed in the Works of Darknes, putting the evil Day far from them, or perhaps have quite forgotten it, then shall CHRIST suddenly descend from Heaven with a Shout, and unexpectedly come to judge the World. But*

Secondly, He shall come in the Clouds of Heaven with great Glory. He who, while upon Earth, was in a mean, low Condition, and vouchsafed to ride upon an Ass; shall then be seen making the Clouds his Chariot, and walking upon the Wings of the Wind. He who once came rather to minister, than to be ministered unto, and had scarce any, but a few poor Fishermen for his Servants; shall at his second Coming be attended by a vast Number of Angels and Arch-angels; thousand thousands shall minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand shall

shall stand before him. He himself tells us, *Luke ix. 26.* that he *shall come in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and in that of the Holy Angels.* By which 'tis very probably meant, that his Coming shall be glorious in respect of the Brightness with which his own celestial Body shall be array'd, which may be called his *own Glory*: In respect of the Authority his Father hath vested him with of universal Judge: Or of his descending in Fire as God did among the *Jews*: Or of an extraordinary Manifestation of the eternal Godhead dwelling in him; which may be understood by *the Glory of the Father*:

And *Lastly*, in respect of that mighty Host of Angels which shall accompany him, making loud and frequent Acclamations to the Glory of his Holy Name; which may be meant by *the Glory of his Holy Angels.* But

Thirdly, He shall come (as with great Glory so) with great Power too. By *this* he shall force all Mankind to appear before his Judgment-Seat; as well all the Generations of them that died from the Beginning of the World before his Coming, as that which shall be alive at it; and by *this* he shall dispence Life and Death to them all. But 'twill be needless to speak

any more to this Branch of his Power here; both because it hath in some measure been already consider'd under our Second general Head; and being in a manner coincident with our next, will be farther enlarged upon under it; to which we therefore proceed; namely,

Fourthly, to enquire how CHRIST will execute this Judgment which is to come. Now my Text says, that he will do it *in Righteousness: God hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained.* Since therefore God hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World in Righteousness; and since he hath ordained the Man CHRIST JESUS to judge; it follows that he will execute this Judgment in Righteousness. And in Truth, this we might collect from the Consideration of the *End* of God's appointing this Judgment; and of the Judge himself. The End of God's appointing this Judgment, is to make Retributions of Rewards and Punishments, according as Men shall have obey'd or disobey'd his Commands; but how can this be done without Righteousness?

Again, if we consider the Judge himself, he never *was*, *could*, or *can* be guilty

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of any the least Sin even in his *human* Nature, and consequently not of Unrighteousness. And then 'tis as impossible for him to be guilty of any, and consequently not to be Righteous as he is God. For *all* Perfection, and consequently Righteousness which is such, is so essential to the very Notion and Being of God, that he could not be God without those Perfections, and consequently without being Righteous.

Nothing therefore can hinder CHRIST JESUS, from rending to all their due, in the Day when he shall judge the Secrets of Men. Error, Partiality, and Corruption which oft times obstruct the Course of Justice in human Judicatories, shall find no Admittance at his Tribunal. 'Tis impossible for any Error to mislead him that is Omniscient: For any Partiality to byass or sway him who *is no Respector of Persons*: Or for any Proffers to bribe the *Judge of all the Earth to do wrong*. But according as Men shall have behaved themselves in this State of Tryal, so shall they receive their final Sentence. *Those who by patient Continuance in well-doing, have sought for Honour, Glory, and Immortality, shall be bid to inherit (and thereupon be seated in the Possession of) eter-*

nal Life, in the Kingdom prepared for them from the Foundation of the World: But those who have not obeyed the Truth, but have obeyed Unrighteousness, shall be commanded to depart (and thereupon immediately be dragged) into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

Thus having in the *First Place*, endeavoured to prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come: Having *Secondly*, shewn who is appointed to execute this Judgment: Having *Thirdly*, consider'd some of the Circumstances of his coming to execute it: And, *Fourthly*, enquired *how* he will execute it: I come now in the *Fifth* and *Last Place*, to make some Application from the Whole.

First then, Since the Doctrine of *eternal Judgment* standeth upon so firm and solid a Foundation; since we are so sure, that the Time will come, when we shall be *judged* for our past Lives; let us live so that we may not be *condemned*. It must certainly be a strange Madness and Folly, for Men who know that *eternal Damnation* shall be apportioned to impenitent Sinners, to persist in such a Course as will infallibly lead them to it. If therefore the *Popes of Heaven* can't ex-

cite us to the Performance of our Duty,

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let the *Fears* of being plunged into *Hell* do it. Let these *Terrors of the Lord* supply the want of Gratitude, and good Nature; and frighten us into a Conformity to his Laws. Let not the *Smallness* of any Sin, or the *Privacy* with which we may commit it, entice us so to do; since the *least* and most *secret* shall not be overlooked by the All-knowing Judge. Let us be sincere in all our Deportment, because though a Hypocrite may pass Muster here for a good Man, we may be sure that no Counterfeit will abide the Test in that Day. In a Word, let us faithfully discharge our Duties to God, our Neighbour and our Selves; and then *when CHRIST shall appear we may have Confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his Coming.*

Secondly, The Consideration of CHRIST's being appointed to be our Judge, should encrease the Comfort, and strengthen the Hope of eternal Life, in all the sincere Professors of his Religion. If we think of a Judgment to come, only as disclosing our Secrets, and pronouncing Sentence against us for them, there are not any who can expect to be acquitted or absolved at that Bar. There is no Man but hath sinned, and thereby deserved

Death

Death the Wages of it: And eternal Happiness infinitely exceeds the Deserts of our *best* Actions, if we should suppose they had *any*: So that an utter Despair of it, and a fearful Expectation of the contrary, as the Wages of our Demerits, is all that we can have in a Judgment, as such. But now, since CHRIST is to sit upon the Throne, and our Saviour is to be our Judge: Since we are to be sentenc'd not according to the Rigour of the Law, but the Mildness and the Mercies of the Gospel; we may look upon the Promises as well as the Precepts of God; and confidently make use of in Relation to a future Judgment, any Sentence of Scripture, that affordeth any thing of Hope, Comfort, and Assurance; because we shall be judged by that Gospel which contains it. If we consider whose Gospel it is, and who shall judge us by it; *we are the Members of his Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones, for which Cause he is not ashamed to call us Brethren.* He is our merciful and faithful High-Priest, hath made Attonement for our Sins, and is now making Intercession for us. So that if we receive CHRIST in all his Offices, as our Prophet; as our Priest; and as our King: If we believe the Commands, as well as the Promises of the Gospel;

Gospel; or take the Promises as they are, not as absolute but conditional. If this *Faith is made perfect* by a constant, sincere (though not sinless) Obedience to his Laws: If we expect our Justification from God's free Mercy in CHRIST, without imputing any Merit to our own Performances; then *his* perfect, exact, and un-sinful Obedience shall be imputed to us, and we shall be absolved and rewarded at the Last Day.

Thirdly, Let the surprizing Suddenness of CHRIST's coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory, persuade us *immediately* to reconcile ourselves to God, by a sincere and hearty Repentance, lest the terrible Day of God's Wrath should find us unprepared. How near *that* is to us, no Body knows; but 'tis plain to every one, that Death which will consign us to *it*, can't be far off; and if that should snatch us away whilst we are in a State of Enmity and Hostility against God, 'twill be the same Thing, as if the Day of Judgment should overtake us unprepared: For if we go hence with our sinful Stains and Pollutions about us, we shall be found so at the Last Day; there being no such Place as a Purgatory to cleanse us after Death. Since there-
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fore every impenitent Sinner *treasureth up to himself Wrath against the Day of Wrath*; and since we know not how soon that Day will come, or we shall be by Death consign'd and bound over to it; let us *presently* set about the great Work of Repentance, that so we may escape *the Wrath to come*. Let us accept of Mercy and Pardon whilst they are tender'd to us, by *immediately* denying and forsaking all Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts; and by *living Soberly, Righteously, and Godly, in this present World*.

In short, if we would with any Comfort behold *the glorious Appearing of the great God and Saviour CHRIST JESUS*, we must frequently *meditate* upon it. For what inexpressible Confusion, Horror, and Consternation, must *those* be in at that Time, who had discarded all the Thoughts of it? *Their Hearts* surely must *fail them*, for looking after *those Things, which shall be then coming upon the Earth*, who had all along lived in a Forgetfulness of them. Since therefore we know neither *the Day, nor the Hour, of our Judge his coming*; let us watch and pray, lest coming suddenly he find us sleeping: Lest he come at a Time when we least expect him, and find us in a Posture incapable of Mercy from

from him, unqualified to receive Benefit by his Coming. *Fourthly and Lastly,* The Consideration of the exact Righteousness, with which CHRIST will judge the World in the Last Day, ought to be Matter of Support to good Men under their Misfortunes; and to keep them from envying or repining at the Prosperity of the Wicked. For as God is pleased to try Men here; to send them Difficulties and Hardships to struggle with, so if they *fight a good Fight*, if they *endure unto the End*, and are found *Faithful*, he will then let a brighter Crown upon their Heads, and will infinitely out-balance their light Afflictions that are but for a Moment, with an exceeding, with an eternal Weight of Glory.

On the contrary, those wicked Persons who shall have lived Irreligiously here; who shall have neglected the several Duties incumbent upon them, though by their outward Condition, they may now seem to be the Favourites of Heaven, and the Darlings of Providence, shall in that terrible Day find to their eternal Confusion, unless a true and timely Repentance prevent it, that they had all *their good Portion in this Life*; and that their Punishment will then be augmented in Pro-
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portion to the Mercies they ungratefully abused. For in that terrible Day, God's Anger shall *smoke* against all those, whom he now suffereth to violate his Laws with Impunity. In that terrible Day, those who now *despise Reproof*, and think themselves too big for it, shall be severely sentenc'd; and *such mighty Men shall be then mightily tormented*. Woe! then will be to those wretched Creatures, who are now deaf to all the Exhortations that are given them to Repentance, and holy Living: How willing will they then be when 'tis impossible for them to make their Peace with God, who now stop their Ears against the Advices and Perswasions of *his Ambassadors, and Ministers of Reconciliation?*

Oh! that we would duly reflect upon these Things betimes; and sincerely govern our Lives now by the Rules which our Holy Religion hath laid down; and then we shall have no Occasion to be dejected at any Calamity that may befall us; or to *fret and be envious against the Workers of Iniquity*: Since at the Last Day, *the Lord, the righteous Judge* shall receive all his faithful Sufferers, and all true Christians, into the everlasting Mansions of infinite Bliss; but shall cast all wicked

wicked People, *High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another*, into the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone; where they shall weep, and wail, and deplore their Misery to all Eternity. From which dreadful Place, God of his infinite Mercy deliver us all, for JESUS CHRIST his Sake. *Amen.*

SERMON vi.

Psalm cxix. 68.

Thou art Good, and dost Good.

AMONG all the glorious Perfections of the Divine Being, there is none shines out with a more eminent Lustre than his *Goodness*. Nay, *This* seemeth to be God's Darling and belov'd Attribute; which he takes a peculiar Delight in, and loves to be known by. For when *Moses* desired to see an extraordinary Manifestation of the Deity, God told him, *that he would make all his Goodness pass before him*: And accordingly we read that *he descended in a Cloud,*

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and passing by before him; proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, long Suffering, and abundant in Goodness: Keeping Mercy for thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin; and who will by no means clear the Guilty.

And what greater Satisfaction could *Moses* or *we* receive, than to hear God making such a gracious Declaration as *this*? Than to behold him thus glorying in *the Riches*, in the Abundance of his Goodness? *This* is indeed that Excellency, which causeth the Notion of him to be agreeable and delightful, which doth (if I may so speak) adorn and beautifie his Nature. His other Attributes, such as Simplicity, Unity, Immutability, Immensity, Eternity, Knowledge, Justice, Power, and the like, render him *awful and majestic*; but his Goodness renders him *amiable*. *These* make him the Object of our profoundest Reverence; but *This* makes him the Object of our most exalted Love.

And since the Goodness of God is so glorious and lovely an Attribute, we cannot surely mispend our Time and Thoughts, if we employ them for a while in the Consideration of it.

* To begin then, the Goodness of God is two-fold: *Absolute* and *Relative*. The former

former I take to consist in the infinite and unbounded Perfections of his Nature: The *latter* in the communicating and imparting of his Bliss. *Both* these seem to be contained in my Text; *Thou art Good, and dost Good:* and *Both* will therefore claim a Place in my following Discourse. And

First of all, God's absolute Goodness; whereby we understand, the infinite and unbounded Perfections of his Nature. That God is infinite and unbounded in the Perfections of his Nature, *must be* granted by every body that owns his Existence. 'Tis scarce possible for us to cast our Eyes upon the Universe, without confessing this great Truth, for all the Parts of it do most loudly proclaim it. We may see a vast deal of Beauty, Perfection, and Goodness in all God's Creatures; *he himself saw every Thing that he had made, and behold it was very good:* And forasmuch as he was the Maker of all Things; forasmuch as he gave them their *Being*; therefore all the Goodness and Perfection, which is *in* them, must be given by *him* too, and ascribed to him as the sole Cause: *They being as unable to make themselves good or perfect, as to make themselves to be.* Now 'tis a very noted Maxim, that

the Cause doth not give any Thing to the Effect, which it enjoys not it self; or in other Words, that *whatsoever is in the Effect must præexist in the Cause.* Since therefore we can read so much Elegance and Perfection, in this huge Volume of the World, which is the *Effect* of God's Power, Wisdom, and Goodness: Since we can behold so much comeliness diffused among the Creatures, by which *they* become amiable, and draw to them our Affections; We cannot but conclude, that God who is the Cause and Creator of them, must be altogether perfect, *altogether lovely*: and say with *Zachariah* in the ninth Chapter of his Prophecy, and at the 17th Verse; *how great is his Beauty, and how great is his Goodness?* His Goodness and Perfections, are indeed so infinitely great, that 'tis impossible for our narrow Capacities to comprehend them. The sublime and rapturous Contemplation of God's Excellencies, will be a principal Ingredient in our future Happiness; but to frame a full Idea of them, will for ever transcend the Limits of our finite Nature. And so much may suffice to have been spoken concerning God's *absolute Goodness.*

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Let us now go on to his *relative Goodness*, namely, that which disposes him to *do Good* to his Creatures. And that God is good in this Sense, I shall endeavour to make out from the following Arguments.

First, From the *Creation*.

Secondly, From the *Preservation*. And

Thirdly, From the *Redemption* of the World, by our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

And *First*, the *Creation* of the World is an Argument of God's Goodness; for 'twas God's Goodness which was the Cause of the Creation, as may be thus made to appear. God was eternally before all Things that are distinct from himself; nothing therefore *extrinsecal* to him could be the Cause of *this* or any *other* Action of his, but it must wholly proceed from somewhat *within*; and that must be the End which was propos'd by him. Now forasmuch as God was always *Self-sufficient*, infinitely and essentially happy in himself; he could not be induced to the Work of Creation, from any View or Proposal of encreasing his *own* Felicity; because that which was already infinite, was utterly incapable of any encrease: And 'tis impiously absurd

to think, that the Contributions of Creatures, should be necessary to compleat the Happiness of the Creator, *who is over all, God blessed for ever.* Being therefore God never stood in need of any Thing; being he never lacked any Entertainment from without; and could have no Prospect of bettering his *own* Condition; what was there that could move him to create the World, but a Willingness and Design to impart some Benefit to *others*? And is not this the very Essence of Goodness? For what End could he endow some Beings with the Faculties of Sense and Reason, but to qualifie them to receive that Happiness which he intended, and was disposed to give? And doth not Goodness consist in proposing and furthering such Ends as these?

Indeed that the Goodness of God was the principal Motive to the Creation, is so obvious a Truth, that the old *Heathens* soon found it out, tho' they had nothing but the glimmering Light of Nature to direct their Search. Thus after *Plato* had enquir'd what should be the Reason of God's making the World, he answer'd, *He was Good.* So again, *Hierocles* in his Comment upon *Pythagoras's* Golden Verses; *there is no other rational Cause,* saith he,

he assignable for the making of all Things, besides *essential Goodness*. 'Twas the Goodness of the Divine Being, the Bignity of his Nature, which incited him to create the World; which inclined him to pronounce that All-commanding *Fiat*, which forced *every Thing* to start out of *Nothing*.

And as the Goodness of God may be inferred from the Creation of the *greater World*, and *the Things that are therein*; so more especially from the framing the *little World*, *MAN*. Upon him he hath printed several *capital* Characters of his Goodness. 'Tis amazing to consider how *peculiarly* nice the Fabrick even of his *Body* is formed; how far in Beauty the Parts of it surpass those of other Creatures. Neither are they only for *Ornament*, but *Use*; *every one* of them being fitted for several distinct Ends or Intentions; and conducing some way or other to Growth, or Nourishment, Sense or Motion. Add to this, that we are furnished with *two* of those Parts which are most noble and beneficial, not only as a Reserve in Case any Misfortune should happen to *one*, but likewise as a Token of the Liberality of the Donor. Again, who can reflect upon the wonderful Operations of
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the Senses, and the Advantages redounding to us from the same, without admiring and extolling the Goodness of the Author! *These* capacitate us for the Enjoyment of Objects that are without us, which *without* these we could not enjoy. What would the most beautiful Object signify to us, if we had no Eyes? the most fragrant Odours, if we had no Noses? the most harmonious Musick, if we had no Ears? and so of the rest. *Lastly*, The Faculty of Speech most loudly speaks the Goodness of God who gave it. 'Twould be tedious to number up all the Benefits which accrue to Mankind from hence: 'Tis sufficient to observe, that by *this* we make known our Wants to one another, and desire Assistance: By *this* we maintain a good Correspondence and Friendship with our Fellow-creatures, and alternately communicate Advice, Reproof, and Consolation. In a Word, that by *this* we declare our Gratitude to our Maker, and *praise and magnify him* for all his Goodness towards us.

✕ But the *Body* of Man (with all its Accomplishments) is but a lower Instance of divine Goodness compared with the Soul: *This* is a Particle of Divinity, in which God fulfilled his Design of *making Man*

in his own Image. The Time would fail me curiously to examine the many Excellencies of it ; besides that, such an Examination would not be very satisfactory. For the Soul is framed with so much Subtility, that it is insearchable even to itself: 'Tis *fearfully and wonderfully made*, the Knowledge of it is so high, that we *cannot attain unto it.* Tho' the most ignorant Person is well *assured*, that he can Apprehend, Remember, and Think ; yet the most *knowing* can but *guess how* they do so, or *where* the Principles of those Acts are placed. Let it then satisfy us, that we enjoy them, and have several good Ends which they serve ; the *chief* whereof is gratefully to contemplate the Bounty of the Benefactor by whom they were bestowed.

Man could not deserve *any* Favour, much less such *peculiar* ones ; but God at the first forming of him, constituted him Lord over the Works of his Hands, out of his own meer good Pleasure ; Out of his own free Goodness, he gave him a Body exceedingly preferable to those of *other* Beings ; and infused into it a Soul endowed with Reason and Immortality.

Neither did his Goodness stop here ; but he graciously vouchsafed to enter in-

to a Covenant with him, that if he faithfully obeyed his Commands, he should after some Time, be translated to a Place of never ending Felicity in *another* World; and for the present, dwell in the most delightful Part of *this*. And though Man yielding to the Devil's Temptation, ungratefully transgress'd the divine Command, and so forfeited his *Title* to the *Heavenly*, as he lost his *Possession* of the *earthly* Paradise; nevertheless, God had so much tender Love and Concern for him, that though he turned him out of *Eden* for ever, yet he made him *again* capable of getting Admission into *Heaven*.

But I shall wave the considering of *This* any farther, till I come to show the Goodness of God, from the Redemption of the World by our Lord JESUS CHRIST; and shall now proceed to my *Second* Argument for it, to wit, the *Preservation* of the World.

The Fall of *Adam* had a fatal Influence upon all those that came out of his Loyns; He himself lived to see the miserable Effects of it, in the horrible Corruption of their Manners. And not long after his Decease, the *Wickedness* of Man was so great in the Earth, the Thoughts of his Heart were so continually evil; that it re-
pent.

pented the Lord that he had made Man, and it grieved him at his Heart. Now for God to preserve the World, notwithstanding so great, and so often repeated Affronts; for him to permit all Things to continue in being, notwithstanding such a provoking Rebellion against him, is a very bright Evidence of his Long-suffering; and Long-suffering is one of the highest Marks of Goodness: Had not God been Infinite in it, 'tis highly probable, that he would have immediately withdrawn Existence from the whole Race of Mankind; and hurl'd back the Universe into its original *Nothing*. But his Vengeance was restrained by *the Riches of his Goodness*, and his Justice as it were curb'd and check'd by his Mercy.

'Tis true indeed, that God *did* pour forth *the Vials of his Wrath* upon that sinful Generation. But even in the Midst of that *Judgment he remembred Mercy*; and *saved Noah* with his Family, in order to People the Earth again after the Flood was over. Nay, farther, *St. Peter* tells us, *That the Long-suffering of God waited in the Days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing*: So that had those wicked Wretches amended their Lives during that Season; had they in that Interval,

washed

washed away their Sins with the Tears of a penitential Sorrow; we have just Reason to conclude, that they had prevented *the Fountains of the great Deep* from sending forth those mighty Torrents; and the Floodgates of Heaven from discharging on them those amazing Streams of Water: But they went on still in their Wickedness, and were therefore at length overtaken by a *Judgment worthy of God*. A Judgment which one might think, would have struck such a Terror into those who *saw* and *escaped* it, as would have always withheld them from offending him who sent it, by any Sin; and yet we find that *Noah* himself within a little while after it, became guilty of the Sin of Drunkenness; and he who was in no Danger from the Flood of Water, was almost drown'd by the Overflowings of Wine.

And indeed the Generations which sprang from him, have all along liv'd in a Revolt from their Creator. Both sacred and prophane History give a sad Account of their prodigious Wickedness and Debauchery. As for those that were *Gentiles*, we find that their *Deities* were lewd and licentious; 'tis therefore no strange Thing to read that the *Votaries* were so too. And as for the *Jews*, they were

were likewise a most provoking Nation, a most disobedient, obstinate, stiff-necked People: But nevertheless, we see that God *preserved* the World, and all Things therein in their mutual Order; caused *Seed-time and Harvest; Summer and Winter; Day and Night*, to succeed each other; and moreover gave *Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling the Hearts* of those impious Wretches with *Food and Gladness*. And would he have done all this if he had not been infinitely Good? Would he have preserved the Earth, and its kindly Fruits to the Use of such ungrateful Creatures, if his Goodness had not been without Bounds?

Once more, and to conclude this point. How daringly is the divine Majesty affronted every Day? And that too by us who enjoy the Light of the glorious Gospel, and can't well be ignorant of the dreadful Penalty which is thereby incurr'd? But notwithstanding all this, God *still permits his Sun to rise, and his Clouds to drop Fatness upon us; he daily follows us, compasseth us about, and loadeth us with his Benefits*: And what should be the Reason of such a Procedure as this? Why, 'Tis because *his Goodness is infinite, and his Mercy over all his Works*: He is

not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance; and therefore he defers the Execution of his Vengeance, and his Long-suffering to us-ward, that so we may at length hear and obey his Voice, and qualify ourselves to enter into his Rest.

Thirdly and Lastly, The Goodness of God receives the highest Illustration from the Redemption of the World by our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Although Man fell from the blissful Abode in which he was seated and by sinning defaced God's Image that was stamped upon his Soul; notwithstanding this Ingratitude and High-Treason against Heaven, he was re-admitted into Favour, and put in a Capacity of obtaining a Possession in it. The same Chapter of the Bible which gives an Account of his Fall, doth also relate his Recovery. The same Chapter which records his Breach of the *first* Covenant, doth also register God's entring into the *second* with him. Nay, before we come to the condemnatory Sentence which God pronounced for that Violation, we read his Promise, that *the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*. All which you may see at large in the *third* Chapter of the Book of Genesis.

And

And when the Fullness of Time was come, God so loved the World, that he sent forth his Son made of a Woman, that the World through him might be saved. And can there be a greater Evidence of divine Goodness than *this*? Could this Attribute be more gloriously display'd than by *such* an Action?

Considering the Misery from which we are redeemed, and the Happiness which is procured for us, we cannot but acknowledge God's singular Love and Goodness, even in the *bare Act* of Redemption: But that he should accomplish it in such an *astonishing* Manner! That his only begotten Son, he who was God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; that *he* should leave the Throne of his Glory; *disrobe* himself of all the outward Marks of his Majesty; and cloath himself with Flesh and Blood in order to work it out! That *he* who was Rich should for our Sakes become Poor, that we through his Poverty might be Rich! That *he* who was Immortal should submit to assume our mortal Nature, and endure in it a great Fight of Afflictions, and at length die a most painful and ignominious Death; that *we* might live for ever, that *we* might be exempted from ever-

lasting Misery, and enjoy eternal Happiness; how unfathomable is *this* Grace? What an unsearchable Depth of Love and Goodness is *this*? God could have no private View; no Design of encreasing his *own* Happiness; no; *That* was from all Eternity infinite, and therefore as little capable of being encreas'd, as diminish'd. But all this Humility and Abasement, all this stupendous Condescension, all these Miracles of Mercy were in Pity and Compassion to the Misery of his Creatures. 'Twas for us Men and for our Salvation, that he came down from Heaven, *took upon him the Form of a Servant, and became obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross.*

And thus I have gone through what I at first propos'd: I shall now draw some useful Inferences from what hath been delivered, and so conclude. * And

First, From the foregoing Discourse we may infer the Nobleness of being good natured and generous; of wishing well to *all* Men, and *doing good* to as many as we can. For by *these* Qualities, we are conformed to the Divine Nature, and made like unto the *best* of Beings. And can any thing be *more* noble than to be like unto God? Or can any thing derive to

us so much Glory, as to do as *the King of Glory* doth? *He* reckons his greatest Honour and Excellency, to consist in his Attribute of Goodness. And therefore if we imitate *That*: If we open our Hands wide to relieve the needy; if we contribute with a free Heart, to advance the Satisfaction of our Brethren; and are ready to oblige *all* Men as far as is just and equitable; we must needs be proportionably brave and glorious; our Persons cannot but be greatly honour'd and ennobled. The more we resemble the Supreme Being, the more honourable and illustrious we must of necessity be; but now the more Generous and Goodnatur'd we are, the more we *shall* resemble him.

Whereas on the other Hand, nothing can be more unlike and contrary to him, than Selfishness and Ill-nature. *These* are Properties which God utterly loaths and abhors; as rendring those that are governed by them, Paltry and Mean, Earthly and Develish. God Almighty made us sociable Creatures and design'd that we should set forward one another's Welfare. So that if we lay groveling upon the Earth, like Muck-worms: If we gripe from others as much as we can: And if we bear any body ill-will: In short, if we

are cross to one another; and unwilling to do each other what good Offices we are able; 'tis plain, that we don't regard a main End of our Creation; that we make ourselves *little and contemptible*; and transcribe upon our Minds the Disposition of the grand Apostate.

These are Thoughts, which if duly attended to, may unclinch the closest Fist; enlarge the narrowest Heart, and render them as Generous and Good-natur'd, as one would wish. Let us then think them *over and over again* with ourselves, that so they may have their kind Influence upon us: And whenever we perceive in us any Motions to Unkindness or Kindness; let us remember for our Discouragement from the *Former*, and Encouragement to the *Latter*; that to be Selfish and Ill-natur'd, is to be Mean, Earthly, Devilish; but to be Generous and Good-natur'd, is to be Noble, Heavenly, God-like.

* *Secondly*, From the foregoing Discourse, we may infer the prodigious Wickedness and Folly of willful and impenitent Sinners. The Goodness of God doth mightily enhance the *Guilt* of bad Men, and maketh their Sins to become the *more exceeding Sinful*. To live without having Respect to *his* Laws, at whose Hands we have

have received so much Good, is not only *Disobedience*, but *Ingratitude*. Now *Ingratitude* is one of the vilest, blackest Crimes that we can be guilty of, even in reference to *Man*; but with regard to *God*, it is infinitely worse: For all the Kindnesses which our Earthly Friends show to us, come *originally* from him: He is the Source and Fountain of them, *They* are but his Instruments of Conveyance. It is God that gave us our Beings and Well-beings: *It is He that made us, and not we ourselves*: It is he that spreads our Tables, and fills our Cups: *In him we live, move, and have our Being*. He hath plentifully provided for our Happiness on Earth now, and hath prepared for us a Kingdom in Heaven, which we shall most certainly *Inherit* hereafter, if we don't sell the *Reversion* of it for the *Pleasures of Sin*. In short, 'tis impossible to reckon up all the Mercies and Blessings, which God *hath* conferred, and *doth* confer upon the Sons of Men; they are *as the Stars of the Sky in Multitude*; and *as the Sand which is by the Sea-shore innumerable*. What monstrous ingratitude must it then be, to fly in the Face of so gracious a God? To rebel against so bountiful a Benefactor? And yet every one doth
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this, and consequently is thus *monstrously Ungrateful*; who lives not in a constant, sincere Obedience, to all his Commands. A Consideration *this* sufficient, if we had any ingenuity, to make us forsake all Sin, and be *holy in all manner of Conversation*.

2. But if we are so far lost to all Sense of Shame and Gratitude, as not to be moved from hence; it must be farther remembered, that infinite *Justice* is an Attribute belonging to God, as well as infinite *Goodness*; and as *This* will pardon all true Penitents, so *That* will punish all obstinate, unrepenting Sinners. And being the *Sins* of *these* Wretches are so much the *greater*, because committed against a God who is infinitely *Good*; therefore the *Punishment* of them, will be so much the *greater too*, because inflicted by a God who is also infinitely *Just*, and *will render to every one according to his Works*.

Let *those* consider this, who when convincingly reprov'd for their wicked Lives, will answer, that God is Good; or God is Merciful! Alas! this will but aggravate their Guilt, and encrease their Damnation. Such Persons who *continue in Sin*, because God's *Goodness* *abounds*; *trample the same under their Feet*; and do *despite to the Spirit of Grace*. They *despise the Riches*

Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering; not knowing that the Goodness of God should lead them to Repentance: But after their Hardness, and impenitent Hearts, they treasure up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath.

Thirdly, and Lastly, From the foregoing Discourse we may infer, that 'tis our Duty to love and praise God above all Things. The principal and natural Attractives of Love and Praise, are the respective Goodness, or Excellency of any Being; and its relative Goodness, or Kindness to us. But now it appears, that these are infinitely more in God, than in any other Being; and therefore our Returns ought to be proportionably greater. If they are not, we must be the most unnatural of all Creatures. To love them that love us, is a Duty but of a low Attainment, the Publicans and Sinners do the same; nay, the very Beasts will do it; the Ox (as the Prophet says) knows his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib. We must act contrary to human Reason, if we don't praise and love God for his Excellencies; but if we are not induced thereto by the Consideration of his Kindness, we must

must be more stupid and senseless than *the Beasts that perish.*

Oh! then let us not fail of performing these our bounden and indispensable Duties: But let us manifest our Love to God, by duly valuing the Excellencies of his Nature; by making him the only proper Object of our Happiness, and preferring him to any Thing that may happen to be his Rival. Let us imitate the glorious and happy Spirits, which are Attendants on God's Throne; and continually give him most humble and hearty Thanks and Praise, for all his Goodness and loving Kindness to us. When the World was Created, *those Sons of God shouted for Joy:* And when our Saviour came to Redeem the World, *a Multitude of them appeared, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the Highest.* And now the Angels, and Archangels; the Cherubim and Seraphim; and the rest of the heavenly Company; are singing Hallelujah's; never-ceasing Hymns; and eternal Anthems; to the Glory of the eternal God, the Almighty Father of Men, and Angels. Let us then joyn in with this celestial Quire; and as long as we have Tongues to speak, *set forth his noble Praise.* Neither let us set it forth with
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our Lips only, but also in our Lives, by giving up ourselves to his Service, and by walking before him in Holiness, and Righteousness all our Days: Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, for JESUS CHRIST his Sake. *Amen.*

SERMON vii.

I John v. 4.

This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

EVER since the Transgression of our first Parents, the Purity of Human Nature hath been miserably stained; its Faculties have been sadly depraved; and its Affections very liable to be deluded, to be influenced, to be overcome by the World. And the Reason of this is obvious enough: For the Temptations which proceed from the World strongly affecting our external Senses, are therein exactly suited to the corrupt Motions of our degenerate Constitution; which unhappily employs it self, but yet is extremely well pleased

pleased in *Their* Gratification: So that here is on the one Hand, Strength to attack, to conquer, and enslave us; and on the other Hand, Unwillingness to resist, Easiness to comply, and Readiness to give up our Freedom: And what can be the Issue of such a fatal Concurrence, but that without some extraordinary Succour, the World must gain an entire Victory, and *lead us away Captive at its Will.*

Now, as we are sure that the Danger of This is very great, so 'tis equally certain, that whomsoever the World *getteth the Dominion over*, it deceiveth his Confidence, baulketh his Expectations, and maketh him draw Discomfort from that which he looketh upon as the Fountain of his Delight. All its golden Promises by which it *allureth* Men to let go their Integrity, are found to be vain, unsatisfying, and empty: And all its dreadful Threatnings wherby it *affrighteneth* them from their Duty, bring upon them much greater Evils than they can avoid by their Sin. These are Truths of which I might produce many Instances out of the History of *former Times*; but that I think our *Own* Observation is abundantly sufficient to confirm it. Do but impartially survey the Condition of those Men, who sacrifice

vice Religion and a good Conscience to their insatiable Ambition, Avarice and Voluptuousness; who stick at nothing, so they may obtain *worldly Honours, Riches, and Pleasure*; and run many Lengths of Iniquity, rather than meet with the Reverse of them: I say, Do but impartially survey the Condition of these Men, and you will find in the End, that their most *luscious Pleasures are mingled with Gall*; that their *Gold and Silver are ranker'd*, and their *Advancement to high Posts of Honour*, proves unto them only *an Occasion of Falling*.

These temporal Evils, and several more which hinder our spiritual Welfare, proceed from our being Slaves to the World; and therefore we must needs reckon it a most valuable Blessing to be delivered from the Bondage thereof, to be Proof against its Charms, and regardless of its Frowns. Since the Corruption of human Nature doth render the Temptations of the World so strong; and since if those Temptations succeed, they will be of very pernicious Consequence unto us; it cannot but be a mighty Satisfaction to secure ourselves from those Mitchiefs which threaten us from this Quarter, by *learning how to escape these Snares which easily beset us; by overcoming this Enemy which*

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doth frequently conquer us. Now for this Purpose we have an infallible Direction insinuated in my Text: *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.* Which Words I shall

First Explain, and show what I take to be the genuine Meaning of them.

Secondly, I shall illustrate the Truth of them.

Thirdly, and *Lastly*, I shall make some Reflections or Observations from them, by Way of Application.

First, Then, I am to explain the Meaning of the Text, and show what I take to be the genuine Sense of it. This Term, *the World*, hath several different Significations in Holy Writ: Sometimes it is used for the beautiful Fabrick of Heaven and Earth, in which are comprehended all the Parts of the visible Creation. Sometimes it is put for the whole Mass of Mankind, which are the principal Inhabitants of it. And sometimes it denoteth those Men only who are given up to its Service, and had rather part with their Integrity than forego *the Good*, or suffer *the Evil Things* of it. *Lastly*, it doth often signify those *Good and Evil Things* themselves, which entice and over-awe Men

to disregard and neglect their Duty. In *this* Acception, I conceive it must be understood here; we being under no Obligation, that I know of, to overcome the World in either of the former Senses.

Now the *good Things of the World*, are Pleasure, Wealth, and Honour: And its *evil Things*, are Pain, Poverty, and Disgrace. These Things are said *to overcome us*, when our Affections are *immoderately fixed* upon them; when we are byass'd and determin'd by them in our Actings about moral Good or Evil. And consequently, *we* may be said *to overcome them*, when our Hearts are lifted up far above them, to an eager Desire, and diligent Prosecution of the Things of another Life: When our Hope and our Fear, our Love and our Aversion, are no more concerned about the Things of *this* World, than Reason and Religion do permit. I say, than Reason and Religion do permit; because as long as we live in the World, both Reason and Religion do jointly allow us to have some little inferior Regard *unto* it. A Dislike of the Calamities, and a Complacency in the Comforts of the World, are interwoven with the very Frame and Constitution of our Nature; and *our heavenly Father,*

knoweth whereof we are made, knoweth what Things we have need of; and what are the Objects of our Disapprobation: and hath accordingly indulg'd us such a Liberty to follow after the Former, and protect ourselves against the Latter, as doth consist with the Attainment of our Supreme Welfare.

And therefore, *to overcome the World*, is not to sit down in a sullen discontented Humour, and live in a continual Abstinence from the Recreations of it. 'Tis not to resign up every Thing valuable in it, merely for the Gratification of a superstitious Fancy, and put ourselves out to the blessed Employment of Begging. 'Tis not to retire from the Company of Mankind, and go a grave Pilgrimage into the Woods and Mountains. 'Tis not to penn ourselves up in a Monastery or Nunnery; or gloomily to lurk in a Cave or a Cell. No; for such Practices as these are so far from being recommended by, that they are quite contrary to, the chearful and social Spirit of Christianity.

But, *to overcome the World*, is to escape the Corruption which is in the World through Lust: 'Tis to bring it under, and keep it in such Subjection, as that it shall want Power to prevail upon us, to com-
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mit any Sin, for the Possession of its Favours, or for the avoiding of its Frowns. And this Interpretation of the Phrase doth appear very agreeable to the Context, compared with the 9th Verse of the iiii Chapter of this Epistle. For whereas we read in the Context, *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World*: We find it there expressed, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*. So long then, as we Use this World, as not Abusing it; so long as we suffer not ourselves to be influenced thereby to commit Sin; so long we may be truly said to overcome it.

In a Word, When our Minds soar aloft towards Heaven and heavenly Things; when we place but a mean Esteem and Value upon the Things of the Earth; when we vastly postpone them in our Judgments to Religion, and a good Conscience; and are ready to quit and forsake them, rather than violate *These*; when we can look down with a noble Air of Contempt upon worldly Blessings and Calamities, if so be that they stand in Competition with our Obedience to God; and would sooner surrender all that we have, and undergo any Trouble, than transgress His Laws: *Then it is that we are Conquerors through CHRIST*

that loved us; Then it is that we gain the Victory over the World. And this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith. By Faith here must be understood, a Belief in JESUS CHRIST, that he is the Son of GOD, and that the Doctrine delivered by Him, is a Revelation of the Will of GOD. This is evident from what the Apostle hath subjoyn'd in the Verse immediately following my Text; *Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that JESUS is the Son of God?* He that believeth that JESUS is the Son of GOD, must also believe that his Doctrine is a Revelation of the Will of GOD, One of these Truths being implicitly contained in the Other. But then we cannot rationally suppose, that a naked Assent to these Propositions, is the Faith here intended; for daily Experience doth sadly testify, That *such an Assent* is too faint and feeble to inspire us with Resolution strong enough to encounter and baffle the World's Temptations. The Faith which will render us *sufficient for these Things*, must be such an unfeigned Belief of the Truth of the Gospel, of the Divine Authority of those Rules prescribed in it for the Conduct of our Lives, as doth incline us to conduct our Lives by

by them. It must be such a steadfast and lively Persuasion that the Promises and Threatnings therein contained are true, as is *the Substance of future Rewards hoped for; and the Evidence of future Punishments unseen.*

From what hath been delivered, I think it appears, that the Meaning of this Passage of Scripture before us, is as follows; to wit, That a firm and active Christian Faith will enable us to subdue and overcome the Temptations of the World; so that none of its *glittering Charms* shall have Power to *allure*; and none of its *grievous Afflictions* shall have Strength to *affrighten* us, from acting in Conformity to our known Duty. The Sense of the Text being thus Explained; I go on to the

Second Thing propounded, namely, To illustrate the Truth of it. And this Point will be made out with as little Trouble as the Former: For the Holy Church throughout all the World doth acknowledge it; the goodly Fellowship of the Apostles declare it; the noble Army of Martyrs witness it; and the glorious Company of Saints (whose Constancy and Perseverance in the Faith; whose Victories and Triumphs over the World, we

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on * this Day commemorate) do confirm it. For 'twas this Faith, which embolden'd the Apostles undauntedly to preach the Gospel of CHRIST, in Defiance of all the powerful and malicious Opposers of it. 'Twas this Faith which made them disdain the Promises, and despise the Threatnings of the World. 'Twas this Faith which caused St. Paul to address himself to the *Romans* in these noble and triumphant Expressions; *Who shall separate us from the Love of CHRIST? Shall Tribulation or Distress, or Persecution, or Nakedness, or Famine, or Peril or Sword? Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor Things present, nor Things to come; nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us, from the Love of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS our Lord.* 'Twas this Faith which made him and the rest of the Apostles, behave themselves in a manner suitable to these confident Expressions; by *denying* themselves the Comforts of Life, and *taking up* their Cross, rather than not follow their Savi-

* Preached on All-Saints Day.

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our. 'Twas the same Faith encouraged the Christians of their Times, to imitate their Example; by drinking of the same bitter *Cup which they drank of*; by being baptized with the *same bloody Baptism wherewith they were baptized*. 'Twas the same Faith which animated the Christians of the succeeding Ages, to tread in their Steps, to pass through a *Red Sea* of their own Blood, before they could arrive at the *Heavenly Canaan*. 'Twas the same Faith which enabled the Professors of Christianity so gloriously to triumph over those many and amazing Storms of Persecutors which happened in the three first Centuries: Such were their Patience and Chearfulness in bearing them, as *confounded* their Prosecutors, *inflamed* the Zeal of the Luke-warm, and were instrumental in bringing over Multitudes to the Faith: So that the Church, which is the Mystical Body of CHRIST, instead of being *lessened and deformed*, grew *larger and more beautiful*, even by the *Loss* of its Members.

And if we come nearer to our own Times, and consider the Church of Rome since she endeavoured to usurp a Supremacy over all other Churches; since she taught Doctrines of Devils; and brought
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into her Worship a Pack of impious, non-sensical, and ridiculous Ceremonies; we shall be from *thence* furnished but with too many Instances of the *glorious Triumphs of a true Christian Faith*. For *what Pleasures* might Men have enjoy'd, *what Wealth and Honour* might they have obtained in *this* World, had they been willing to comply with her detestable Impositions? But how many *Thousands*, yea, *Millions*, were there, who resign'd up all outward Blessings, who refus'd all worldly Advantages, and expos'd themselves to the sharpest Torture, Poverty and Disgrace; rather than pollute themselves with any of her Abominations? Nothing was more admirable than the *Patience and Courage* of those *faithful Christians*, except the *Rage and Malice* of their *Popish Tormentors*; who rack'd their Invention to find out new Instruments of Cruelty; which might *Increase and Prolong* their Pain, and kill them as it were by Inches. But notwithstanding this, their Hopes were continually disappointed, and their Designs rendered ineffectual; for Those whom they falsely called *Hereticks*, kept their *Faith pure and undefilled* even to Death; yea, and frequently expired under the most grievous

vous Instruments of Cruelty ; without so much as complaining, or shewing the least Uneasiness either in Look or Posture.

Whether or no God did suspend the Sense of Pain by a Miracle ; Whether or no the usual Correspondence between the Soul and Body was supernaturally cut off ; Or, whether the Attention of their Minds was taken up about the other World, whereunto they were going ; and so the Animal Spirits being mostly employed upon Thought, and recalled to the Brain, might leave the outward Parts somewhat unfurnished for Sensation ; and thereby cause the Reports of Pain to be imperfect ; is not material to enquire. This is certain, That they did not always die so easily ; and when they did, they were not sure of it till they came to the Trial ; and therefore the Strength of their Faith is not the less to be admired upon that Account.

And, *What more shall I say ? for the Time would fail me to enlarge upon the Victories gained over the World, by that noble Army of Martyrs who sealed their Faith with their Blood in our own Nation. The Time would fail me to tell of RIDLEY, and of LATIMER, of CRANMER also, and the rest of our Reformers, who through Faith yielded themselves up to the*

the *Violence of Fires*; out of *Weakness* were made *Strong*, waxed *valiant in Fight*, were instrumental in putting to flight *Popish Ignorance and Superstition*, and making our Church the *Beauty and the Glory of the whole Earth*.

These were all *Men of like Passions with ourselves*; their *Flesh and Blood* were as naturally desirous of being *pleas'd*, and altogether as unwilling to be *disgusted* as our own. Nevertheless, when they were tempted to renounce their Religion, or to act unagreeably to its *Maxims*, we find that neither the *Best*, nor the *Worst* of this World, had Force enough to prevail upon their Practice, *They took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods*; They freely underwent *Shame and Reproach*; and consisted with the most cruel *Tortures*, rather than take any Steps towards *Apostatizing* from their Profession. That which endued them with such extraordinary *Fortitude and Bravery*, was their *Faith*. 'Twas because they were fully persuaded of the *Certainty of future Punishments and Rewards*; 'twas because their *Hearts stood fast, and believed in the Lord*.

I proceed now in the *third and Last* Place; To make some *Reflections*, or *Observations* from what has been delivered, by Way of *Application*.

First

First then, We may from hence observe the Inconsistency of a true Christian Faith, with an *immoderate* Pursuit of worldly Advantages. I call *that* an *immoderate* Pursuit of worldly Advantages, which forceth us to any sinful Compliance for the Attainment and Possession of them; or keepeth us from minding *the Things which belong to* our supreme Welfare. This is to become perfect Slaves to the World; to be utterly *conquer'd and subdu'd by it*: How then can it be compatible with a Faith whole Property it is to *get the Victory over it*? An Error in this Matter, is of very pernicious Consequence indeed; but yet there are great Numbers amongst us, who seem to be misled thereby, and therefore I hope, this Reflection upon it will not be reckoned Unseasonable. For how frequently may we see Men make their *Duty* truckle to their *secular Interest*? How many are there who *so greedily thirst after* the Wealth, Honour and Pleasure of the World; as to be at the Expence of a good Conscience to come *at* them? And yet at the same Time pretend to believe the Truth of *that* Religion, which forbids the *setting our Affections upon these Things*; and absolutely condemns the

committing any Sin, either to procure, or retain them. *But we have not so learned CHRIST; if so be that we have heard him, and been taught by him, as the Truth is in JESUS:* That a true Christian Faith will enable a Man to encounter and overcome the Temptations of the World, by disposing and influencing him to foregoe, and resign the Good, and suffer the Evil Things of it; when *those* cannot be acquired or possessed, and *these* cannot be avoided, without acting contrary to some of the Precepts of Religion.

Secondly, From what hath been said, we may reflect upon the great Advantage and Blessing of being endued with this victorious Faith. How happy must it be for a rational Soul that is well acquainted with its own Worth and Value, to have Courage enough to *maintain* its Dignity? What an agreeable Entertainment must it be for a Man who hath a proper Notion of his *chief Interest*, to consider that he hath a Principle within him, will carry him through all the Difficulties that oppose it? Who that duly ponders the Danger and Misery of being deluded by the World's Temptations, would not be glad of Assistance to overcome them? This is a Blessing well worth

our

our *hungering and thirsting* after: This deserves our utmost Care and Diligence attain it.

Be it therefore our frequent Employment to contemplate upon that Holy Religion which we profess. With cool and unprejudiced Minds examine we those convincing Arguments which establish its *Certainty and Reasonableness*. With close Attention consider we, That Eternity of inconceivable Torment it denounceth against the Wicked; and the infinite Excellency of that everlasting Reward it promiseth to the Righteous. With hearty and constant Prayer implore we the Grace of Almighty God, to co-operate with our Endeavours: *And then, according to the Riches of his Glory, He will grant us to be strengthened with Might, by his Spirit in the inner Man: He will give us the Shield of Faith, which will empower us to stand steadfast, and overcome in the Hour of Temptation.*

Thirdly and Lastly, From the foregoing Discourse, we may observe, That if God should permit the Enemies of our Religion to have Power to persecute us for it, and to tempt us to renounce or corrupt its Purity; it is our indispensable Duty to resist their Temptations with the

utmost Abhorrence; readily to surrender all Things, which this World counts dear; and die for the Sake of our most Holy Faith. Let us therefore *put on the whole Armour of God*, and fit ourselves for a suffering Condition: Let us prepare to *resist even unto Blood, striving against Sin*; that so *We may be able to withstand in the evil Day, and having done all, to stand*^a. It may not be long before we are brought to the Trial; for our Pure and Apostolick Church, which hath of late been *unjustly and maliciously insinuated to be in Danger*; under the present King's *Administration* doth now appear to be brought into *very great Danger indeed*, even by Those who have all along pretended the most burning Zeal for its *Safety*. It doth now plainly appear to all, whom obstinate Prejudice hath not blinded, That those Men, whose Persons have been had in *high Admiration*, upon Account of their *sham Pretences* in Favour of the *Church of England*; have been for a long while endeavouring, and are at this very Juncture endeavouring, to

^a This Sermon was preached before the University of Oxford, in the Time of the Rebellion, in the Year 1715. The Author is willing this Passage should remain as it was then delivered, as a Monument of his *just Affection* for the *best of Governments* in the *worst of Times*.

bring her into Bondage to the Church of Rome; merely for the Advancement of their own *worldly Interest*; the only Thing which they had ever an hearty Concern for. If the abominable Designs of these Men should succeed, and Popery should again be rampant in this Nation, *which God forbid*; we know what *Tribulation* and *Distress*, what *Misery* and *Torture*, we must submit to; or that which is infinitely worse; I mean, the Renunciation of our Religion, which is inseparably attended with the Loss of a good Conscience.

It is high Time then, that we *examine ourselves*, *Whether we be in the Faith*; and provide for the worst Accidents that may happen. God hath indeed frequently interposed in Favour of this Church and Nation; He hath often rescued us, when we have been in the *Jaws* of Ruin, when we have been upon the very *Brink* of Destruction: And by His detecting the treacherous hellish Contrivances of our *perjured, false Brethren*, we have Reason to hope, that He will *now* deliver us. But if not; Let us make it known to them, and all their Friends and Adherents, That we will neither *pray to their Saints*, nor *worship the gilded Images which they would*

set up, nor comply with any other of their unreasonable, ridiculous, and devilish Impositions. Whatever Affliction we may meet with for Persevering in our Faith; it will be but light, if put in the Ballance against that eternal Misery which will be laid upon us for Rencuncing it: And if we bear that light Affliction which is but for a Moment, it will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. For Affliction, there will be Glory; for Light Affliction, a Weight of Glory; for Light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, an exceeding, an Eternal Weight of Glory.

To conclude therefore, Let us watch; stand fast in the Faith; Quit ourselves like Men, like Christians; and be strong; Always remembring. That it is an infinitely less Evil to burn a few Minutes for a good Conscience, than for ever with a bad one. But that we may neither burn for the One, nor with the Other; God of his infinite Mercy grant, for JESUS CHRIST his Sake. Amen.

Almighty, who know what an ardent longing for it was implanted in our Conscience, hath been graciously pleased to inform us what it is to be had; and how

SER.

SERMON viii.

John xiii. 17.

If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.

CHRISTIANITY is an Institution of such a generous Nature, so nicely calculated for the Felicity and Advancement of Mankind, that it provides both for our temporal and eternal Interest: As by an hearty Obedience to its Commands, we are sure to be made Happy in the Life *which is to come*; so it is certain, that the same Obedience will make us Happy in the Life *that now is*.

Happiness is the grand Object of every one's Wishes and Desires: 'Tis the *goodly Pearl* which all Men seek for; the *Treasure* which the whole Race of *Adam* endeavour to get Possession of. And God Almighty, who knew what an ardent Longing for it was implanted in our Constitutions, hath been graciously pleased to inform us *where* it is to be had; and *how* it

it is to be attained: He hath given us certain Rules, which, if walked by, will bring us to the Mansions of infinite Bliss, and the Fruition of Joys that shall never have an End. Neither hath he only laid up for us, *an exceeding great Reward* in a future State, but hath also made an ample Provision for our present Happiness and Welfare; by causing a very large Share of the most refined Pleasure, immediately to attend the due Performance of our Duty. And what a mighty Encouragement must it be to obey God's Laws, to be persuaded that in so doing we shall be sure to meet with Happiness? And how plainly is This declared in the Text before us, *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them?*

Which Words, being recorded as spoken by our blessed Saviour, presently after he had vouchsafed to wash his Disciples Feet, may more *especially* recommend to us, the Duty of Humility and Condescension to the lowest Offices, for each others Good. But because whensoever Happiness is promised upon the Performance of any single Duty, 'tis at the same Time supposed, that we are duly qualified for it in all other Respects: And because *the Son of God was manifested to destroy all*
other

other Works of the Devil, as well as Pride; and to purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of all other Graces, as well as Humility; I shall therefore consider the Words, without any particular Relation to the Context, and Discourse from them in the following Manner:

First, I shall endeavour to show, that we cannot be truly Happy, unless we do our Duty, as well as know it.

Secondly, That we shall assuredly be Happy, if we know our Duty, and do it too.

Thirdly, HOW our Duty must be done in order to make us Happy.

After which, I shall observe to you, in the

Fourth and Last Place, What Influence the Doctrines that will be delivered under the foregoing Heads, ought to have upon our Hearts and Lives.

First then, We cannot be truly Happy, unless we do our Duty, as well as know it; Knowledge alone, being altogether insufficient for the Purpose. 'Tis possible for Man who is afflicted with any grievous Distemper, to know of some Remedy which would straitly mitigate his Pain, and give him his present Relief; but yet unless he maketh an Application of this Remedy

Remedy, he will soon be convinced to his Sorrow, that the bare Knowledge of it will do him no Service. In like manner we may *know*, that a great Part of our Duty consisteth in regulating our perverse Wills; conquering our rebellious Passions; and placing them in a due Subordination to the higher Faculties of the Soul; but except this is actually *done*; our Conditions will be never the more Easy, and our Lives never the less Unhappy: For 'tis the Violence of our Passions, and Depravity of our Wills, that most of our Trouble is owing to: Whilst *they* remain unsubdued, we are put to continual Toil and Vexation, to satisfy their Importunities; which by being satisfied, become the Parents of more Toil and Vexation.

Thus an indiscreet Choice of a seeming good, soon makes a Man smart under the Sense of a real Evil. Uncontrolled Desires of unlawful Pleasures, hurry him to the Pursuit of such Enjoyments, as may perhaps afford a little *Sweetness in the Mouth*, but quickly prove *as bitter as Gall in the Belly*. How does Envy, when it rules over us, abate the Relish of our own Possessions? How does it suck up our Spirits, and make us pine and wither to see others flourish and thrive? How does

an indulged Thirst after Revenge, at one Time fill us with Care how to injure our Neighbour, without exposing ourselves to the Lash of Human Laws? And at another Time, prompt us to *smite him secretly*, which, when done, is attended with a tormenting Fear of being discovered, and punished for it *openly*? What needless Troubles does he undergo that is governed by the Love of Money? How does he *disquiet himself in vain*? And how afraid is he to taste of the Comforts of Life, lest he should not *heap up Riches* for he knows not who, to gather, or squander away? To what Inconveniences is that Person forced to submit, who is a Slave to Vain-glory? What Hazards does he run to get a little popular Applause, which frequently is but the Fore-runner of Hatred and Disgrace? Sometimes Ambition and Covetousness shall meet in the same Man's Bosom; and then what a Struggle and Contention must necessarily follow? By the *One* he is urged to seek after Honour: By the *Other* he is rendered unwilling, to do those generous Actions that may deserve it. And so his Mind is, as it were, almost torn asunder by two opposit Passions; whilst he is in a perplexing Doubt which to Obey; or whether to part with his

his Money in order to attain Glory ; or to disregard Glory to save and increase his Gold.

One might make more Observations of a like Nature with these ; but these are sufficient to represent unto us in some Measure, the miserable Effects of not keeping our Wills and Affections under due Government ; the Troubles and Vexations an Obedience to their irregular Commands will bring upon us ; together with the Tumults and Commotions they will unavoidably raise in the Breast of that Person who is a Vassal unto them ; who may therefore be justly compared *to the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters, being driven hither and thither by opposite Winds, are mixed and polluted with Mire and Dirt.* And from hence it must appear to every considering Man, that the *Knowledge* of our Duty will avail us nothing towards a happy Life, unless we likewise *Practice* it, in reducing our Wills, and Passions unto a proper Subjection ; because if they be not *so* reduced, they will constantly create us a deal of Trouble and Disquiet with which a State of Happiness is utterly inconsistent.

Again, if we know our Duty and forbear to do it, our Consciences will condemn

damn and punish us for the Neglect: Notwithstanding the wicked Artifices that we may use, to avoid the Lashes and Upbraidings of our Minds, we shall frequently feel them whether we will or no. When we are striving to divert ourselves by drinking, revelling, and the like, These will ever and anon break in upon us; spoil our forced Mirth; and make our *Hearts sorrowful even in the midst of Laughter*: Thus we shall be depraved of the Happiness of Life, and in some sort tortur'd with the Misery of the Damn'd.

Farthermore; the Happiness of any Being consisting in such a State as doth exalt it to the utmost Perfection of which it is capable according to its Rank and Kind; the Happiness of Man, must therefore consist in such a State as is most agreeable to Reason, as may procure the Favour of Heaven, and fill him with a well-grounded Hope of Blessedness in another World: But now, as will appear by and by, we cannot get into such a State as this, unless we do our Duty, as well as know it; and consequently unless we do our Duty as well as know it, we cannot get into the Possession of Happiness.

Thus we may see, that the Practice of our Duty is absolutely necessary to make

us Happy *here*; and upon a little more Consideration, we shall find it as necessary to make us Happy *hereafter*. For our future Happiness will consist in the Enjoyment of Pleasures that are of a very refined, and spiritual Nature: And because all Perception of Pleasure is caused by the Agreement between the Objects possessed, and the Faculties possessing; therefore where this Agreement is wanting, 'tis impossible for any Pleasure to be perceived or enjoyed. But now if we live in the Neglect of our known Duty, this Agreement will be wanting between *our* Faculties, and those Objects from which our future Pleasures must flow; and consequently, from the *Possession* of those Objects, no Pleasures can flow to us. The Dregs of original Sin, with which the Nature of all Men is tainted, produce in us great Aversions from that which is Good; and strong Propensions to that which is Evil: So that *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit*; we do not naturally pursue refined, and spiritual Delights, but are bent upon those which are gross, and carnal. The Practice of our Duty will go a great Way towards curing this Depravation, and purging out this Corruption: It will very much exalt and purify our Natures; restore

restore to us a good Degree of that original Righteousness with which Man was at first created; and thereby give us a Relish of those excellent and spiritual Objects from which we shall receive that elevated Satisfaction Almighty God designed us for.

Hence I take it to be a Notion very consonant to Reason, that the Duties we are enjoined to practise, were intended as Means to *Fit and Prepare* us for eternal Happiness, as well as to be *the Conditions* of it. For whereas *by* the Practice of those Duties, we *may* and *shall* be capable of enjoying the Pleasures of the World to come; *without* the Practice of them, our natural Corruption will grow upon us more and more; we shall be chained closer and closer to sensual Gratifications; we shall have greater and greater Aversions from those which are more refined, and spiritual; and for that Reason be less and less capable of being Happy hereafter; because 'tis in *such* Gratifications, that our future Happiness will consist.

If then, those People, who live and die in a willful Disobedience to the known Laws of the Gospel, were *caught up to the Third Heaven*; and made Inhabitants

of *the City of the Living God*; They could not reap any Advantage from the glorious Privileges belonging to that Place. The Sight of God would amaze and terrify, but not delight them: The Company of Angels, and just Men made perfect, would upbraid their Turpitude, and Impurity, but not administer to them the least Comfort: And the Employments of the Blessed, would be their Trouble and Grief, instead of their Joy and Satisfaction. These Things being quite contrary to such Men's Inclinations, would change Heaven it self, into a Hell; and make them excessively miserable, even in the Mansions of Bliss.

And yet into those Mansions such Persons shall never enter: As they are under an Incapacity of being Happy; and under a Necessity of being Miserable *in* them: So by the expresse and unchangeable Declarations of God, they are Everlastingly shut *out* of them. Nothing is revealed in the Scriptures more clearly, than that * *without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord*: And whosoever thinks he shall be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, without doing the Will of God, (let his Knowledge of it be ever so perfect) is

* Heb. xii. 14.

certainly under a most dangerous Mistake, and Delusion. Such a Knowledge of God, as is not accompanied with Obedience to him, is not to be reckoned a true Knowledge of him. For as St. John speaks in his 1 Epist. ii. 3, 4. *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* And how miserably deceived, those will find themselves at the Last Day, who proceed no farther than to a naked Profession, or Knowledge of the Gospel; we may learn from our Blessed Saviour, in Mat. vii. 21, 22, 23. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not Prophesied in thy Name? and in thy Name have cast out Devils? and in thy Name have done many wonderful Works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from Me, ye that work Iniquity.* Nay so far is he from giving us any Encouragement to think, that the Knowledge of our Duty will be conducive to our Happiness without the Practice of it, that

he teaches us a quite different Lesson; namely, that It will be an Aggravation of our Guilt, and expose us to a much severer Punishment, than we should otherwise be afflicted with: as is evident from *Luke xii. 47, 48.* *That Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit Things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes: For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

From what hath been said therefore 'tis plain, that by resting in a bare Knowledge of our Duty, we shall lose the Divine Favour; forfeit the Hopes of Felicity; and unavoidably draw upon ourselves Destruction. We shall be like unto the foolish Man who buildeth his House upon the Sand, and trusteth in that for Protection and Shelter: For as when the Sea rages and swells, and the Waves thereof toss themselves prodigiously, such a House will betray a Man, the more fatally to the violent and dismal over-flowing of the vast Collection of Water; so when the fierce Vengeance of Almighty God shall be terribly

ribly displayed before all the World; by having known our Duty and not done it, we shall be sunk the Deeper in *the Lake of Fire and Brimstone*. But *if we look into the perfect Law of Liberty and continue therein, and be not forgetful Hearers, or Knowers only, but Doers of the Work; then we shall be Happy, for ever Happy, in our Deeds.* Which leads me to the

Second Thing propounded; That is, to show that we shall assuredly be happy, if we know our Duty and do it too. Thus our Blessed Saviour tells us in the Text; *If ye now these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.* If ye *now* these Things: We must first of all endeavour to get a right Knowledge of our Duty, otherwise 'tis not to be expected that we should rightly perform it. By *blindly* following the Directions of others, we may perhaps do some Acts of Obedience, But then 'tis but by chance that we do them: We are uncertain whether we do them or not: And whilst we think we are obeying God, we may for ought we know, be transgressing his Commands. The Service which God requires of us is *a reasonable Service*; but *That* cannot be justly reckoned Reasonable, for the doing of
which

which we can give no better Reason, than that others confidently *Say* we must do it: And indeed 'tis but too evident, from Matter of Fact; that those Persons who *absolutely* resign up themselves to the Guidance of others, instead of taking upon them *the easy Yoke* of CHRIST, are in a fair Way to be *heavy laden with grievous Burdens of Men*: Burdens which they ought not to bear; and which the Imposers of them are unwilling *to touch so much as with one of their Fingers*; unless it be to Press them closer upon their poor, unthinking, miserable, implicit Believers.

If then we would avoid these Dangers, and walk in the certain Road to Happiness; we must constantly follow the Directions of the Holy Scriptures. *They* are the only infallible Guides in Things pertaining to our Duty: Of *them* therefore let us enquire what we are to do: By *them* let us try every Doctrine we are taught: And according as it squares or disagrees with *them*, let us embrace or reject it. In short; let us see with our own Eyes, as much as we can; and where *they* fail us, let us take in the Assistance of those whom we have the best Reason to think will not mislead us; always imploring the Favour of Heaven to preserve us from falling into Error.

By *these* Means, (and only by these) we may arrive at a competent Knowledge of our Duty; and then if we likewise practise it, we shall certainly be happy. We shall be happy in pleasing Reflections on our past Conduct: Happy in the Enjoyment of Peace with God: Happy in the Peace and Quiet of our own Consciences: And happy in the blessed Expectations of future Happiness. To think that we have obeyed the Dictates of right Reason; and followed the Prescriptions of our holy Religion; will afford us Abundance of Gladness and Complacency. To be temperate in our Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, Labours, and Diversions, will stave off a great deal of Pain, and Sicknes; and make our Bodies clean, vigorous, and lively. To bridle our impetuous Passions, and keep them in order, will defend us from being troubled with inward Tempests, and regale our Souls with a perpetual Calm. And to meditate on *the precious Promises*, which are made *to them who persevere in well-doing*, will in some sort bring Heaven down to Earth, and entertain us with an Earnest of the Delights of *Canaan*, whilst we are Pilgrims in the *Wilderness*.

Thus if we know our Duty and do it
too;

too, the Thoughts of it will lie smooth and even, our Bodies will be healthful and strong; our Minds composed and serene; and, like the upper Region of the Air, be free from all boisterous Hurricanes and Commotions. And in all Conditions of Life, we may refresh and gladden our Hearts, by the Contemplation of that inconceivable Reward, which will be dispensed to us in another World. And how happy must such Circumstances necessarily render us? How pleasantly must our Years roll on, when, besides an harmonious Frame of Body, we possess the most transporting Joys in our Souls? *These* Joys are equal to the Capacities of a rational Creature: *These* Joys are noble and intellectual; and as far superior to all sensual Satisfactions, as the Subject of them, the Soul, is superior to the Body: And yet *these* Joys will immediately be conveyed to us, upon the due Performance of our Duty.

But as for the Happiness that will be bestowed upon us, after we are *Dissolved and be with CRHIST*; if a Man had *the Tongue of an Angel*, and the Knowledge of an Arch-angel, he could not raise in you a perfect Notion of it. Until our Understandings are more enlightened, and the

the rest of our Faculties made wider ; the highest Thoughts of it, will be comparatively mean and low ; the strongest Conceptions languid and faint. It is in General represented unto us ^f by the Sight of God ; by Life eternal ; by a Crown of Glory ; by the Kingdom of God ; and by a Treasure in the Heavens that faileth not. These Things we know, do of all other most deserve our Esteem, and Desire ; tho' what is the *full Meaning* of them, is *exceeding abundantly above all that we can Think*. For the Enjoyment of these Things, or that which is shadowed out by them, the Knowledge and Practice of our Duty will fit us ; and *to* the Enjoyment of them, they will bring us. Whence it is, that in the sacred Pages, we frequently meet with such Expressions as these ^g : *Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life : Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due Season we shall reap, if we faint not : Be ye always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord* : From all which it is undoubtedly certain, that

^f Mat. v. 8. i John iii. 2. Mat xxv. 46. i Pet. v. 4.
^g multis alijs in locis. ^h Rev. xxii. 14. Gal. vi. 9.
 i Cor. xv. 58. & alibi.

we shall be happy if we *know* our Duty and *do* it too. I need not therefore dwell any longer upon this Theme; but, lest we should run into any Mistakes, about a Matter of so great Concernment, and thereby lose our Way to Blessedness, proceed to enquire, *how* our Duty must be done, in order to make us happy. But this may be reserved to another Opportunity.

S E R M O N ix.

John xiii. 17.

If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.

WHEN I entred upon this Subject, I proposed to do these four Things:

First, To show, that we *cannot* be truly happy unless we *do* our Duty, as well as *know* it.

Secondly, That we shall assuredly be happy, if we *know* our Duty and *do* it too.

Thirdly

Thirdly, How our Duty must be done in order to make us happy.

Fourthly and Lastly, To observe what Influence the Doctrines that would be delivered under the foregoing Heads, ought to have upon our Hearts and Lives.

The two *first* of these Points I have already dispatched; and proceed now to the

Third Thing, Namely, to enquire *how* our Duty must be done in order to make us happy.

Although Happiness be a sure Consequence of the Performance of our Duty, yet unless it is done aright we may fall short of Happiness: But then the Fault ought not to be attributed to our Duty, but to the wrong Methods of performing it. And indeed it is very common for Men to deceive themselves in this Point. A great many will pretend to a mighty Zeal and Regard for this or that Precept of the Gospel; whilst they seem to slight others that are equally Divine and necessary: For such Persons to expect to be happy, in their *partial* Obedience, is no less irrational, than for a Patient to look for Benefit from his Physician's Prescription

when he leaves out of the Composition some of the principal Ingredients.

Others there are who take upon them CHRIST's *easy Yoke*, not willingly, but as by Constraint and of Necessity; and then no Wonder if it galls their Necks; if his *light Burthen* sits heavy upon their Shoulders: If the Ways of Religion be not to them *Ways of Pleasantness*; and do not conduct them to the Regions of Peace.

There are others who deck themselves with a splendid Appearance of Sanctity; and do good *Works*, out of the vain-glorious Principle of *being seen by Men*, and gaining Honour and Applause in the World: But the Doom of these Persons was long ago declar'd by our Saviour to his Disciples; *Verily I say unto you, they have their Reward*: That insignificant empty Reward which was their Aim they may sometimes meet with; but the substantial Reward of Sincerity they are like always to go without.

Lastly, The Number of those is not small, who begin a Religious Course, and walk a few Paces in it; but then, either despairing to rub through that Opposition which is commonly about the Entrance of the *Narrow Way*; or else, being seduced by the treacherous Allurements of

of Sin ; they foolishly ramble into the *Broad Road* of Wickedness and Vice, wherein every Step they take will bring them nearer and nearer to the greatest Misery and Ruin.

After such a Variety of Ways may Men perform their Duty, and miss of the *Blessedness* that *we have spoken of* : To obtain which, we must utterly decline the Proceedings here mentioned, and act directly opposite to them : That is, we must do our Duty.

First, UNIVERSALLY.

Secondly, WILLINGLY.

Thirdly, With SINCERITY. And

Fourthly, With PERSEVERANCE.

First, Our Duty must be done Universally : *Whatsoever* God hath enjoined us, we must carefully execute ; and as carefully avoid *whatsoever* he hath forbidden : So shall we not be ashamed when we have Respect unto ALL his Commandments. He hath not given any of us a Licence to transgress so much as one of them, but we are indispensably bound to obey them All. Thus *Moses* taught the *Israelites* with Reason to the Laws of God, which he delivered unto them : *Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you,*

neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the Commandments of the Lord your God which I command you, Deut. iv. 2. And so again in the 12th Chapter of the same Book, at the 23d Verse; *What Thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* And in like Manner, we Christians are exhorted in the New ^h Testament, to be Holy in all kind of Conversation; which is more than is contained in the Commission CHRIST gave his Apostles in Mat. xxviii. 20: where he bids them *teach Mankind to observe all Things whatsoever he had commanded them*: Agreeable whereunto is his own Declaration, in the xvth of St. John's Gospel at the 14th Verse; *Ye are my Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.* And unless we do so; we shall neither be his Friends nor our own; for to indulge ourselves in the Breach of any one of his Commands, will put us in a State of Enmity against him; and sow in us the Seed of Trouble and Disquiet.

What will it profit a Man, to be an Enemy against Immorality and Profaneness, if he gives himself up to Oppression or grinding the Face of the Poor? *This alone*

^h 1 Pet. i. 15.

will

will be sufficient to expose him to the Vengeance of Heaven, to draw upon him the Scorn of good Men, and the Hatred of bad Men, and make him *a Curse, and an Astonishment, and an Hissing, and a Reproach* among all that know him.

Thus again, if we are addicted only to Covetousness, this *Root of Evil* will constantly bring forth its proper Off-spring, and *pierce us through with many Sorrows*.

So again, if we take Delight in exceeding the Bounds of Temperance, though we are careful to observe all other Duties; yet this single Transgression being indulged, will too often engage us in unhappy Disputes, and be frequently the Cause of Sickness and Pain.

Thus likewise, though we take so much heed to our Ways as to be sober in our Lives; zealous for God's Worship; and honest in our Dealings; yet if we make no Conscience of slandering our Neighbours, and speaking Evil of the Absent; from hence alone the Harmony of Conversation will be disturbed, and we must expect to meet with the mischievous Effects of Disaffection and Ill-will.

Of the same Nature will be the Consequence of living in any other darling Sin whatsoever; for *every one* has a Tendency

to destroy the Felicity of Life, either by hurting our outward Condition, or by creating us inward Remorse and Disquiet, or by *Both*: To which I may add, That 'tis scarce possible for any particular Sin to reign in us, without having others to countenance and support it. Indeed one ruling Sin naturally begets another; and the more Sin, the more Misery: So that nothing less than forsaking all Sin, and living in universal Obedience can establish us in a State of Happiness in this World.

And the same Behaviour is necessary to qualify us for the Happiness of the World to come. For to pick out some Rules for our Observance, and to refuse Compliance with others, is interpretatively to capitulate and make Articles with the Divine Law-giver; which, without Doubt, he will for ever disdain to countenance or yield to.

Forasmuch as every one of his Laws is enacted by the same Power, and enforced with the same Sanctions, every one of them hath an equal Obligation upon the Conscience as to the Point of Obedience tho' not as to the Priority or Precedence thereof: So that we cannot live in the wilful Violation of any one, without an implicit
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Contempt or Denial of God's sovereign Authority, and becoming liable to the same *Kind*, though not to the same *Degree* of Punishment, as if we had violated *all*.

With a little Alteration therefore, those conditional Promises and Threatnings which were made to *Joshua* and the *Israelites*, may be properly applied in a spiritual Sense to every Christian: *If thou wilt observe to do according to all that is commanded thee; then thou shalt make thy Way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good Success: But if thou wilt not observe to do according to all the Divine Laws, that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord thy God; then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderful.* Josh. i. 8. Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

Secondly, Our Duty must be done willingly. 'Twas the common Opinion of the ancient ⁱ *Greeks* and *Romans*, concerning those Victims which seemed to expire with a great deal of Reluctance; or were forcibly dragged to the Altars; that they were unacceptable to their Deities, and portended some Evil to them-

ⁱ See Bishop Potter's *Greek Antiquities*, Vol. I. Book 2. Chap. 14. Dr. Kennet's *Roman Antiquities*, Part II. Book 2. Chap. 4.

selves. A *like* Judgment may without Superstition be made of those *living Sacrifices* that *we* are obliged to present unto the Almighty, if they be not offered with a willing Mind; for then they will neither please him, nor promote our own Felicity.

Things which are done grudgingly, out of Compulsion, or from fear of Punishment only, are very troublesome and distasteful to the Doers of them; can we then justly think, that they will be satisfactory to him upon whose Account they are done? If such Actions are extremely ungrateful to *ourselves*, can it reasonably be supposed that they will be delightful to God? No, he doth not rule over us like a *Tyrant*, and therefore will have great Provocation to be Angry, if we serve him like *Slaves*. He is willing to assist us himself in the Obedience of his Commandments, and may therefore justly expect that our Obedience should be ready and cheerful.

Unless it is so, 'tis certain, we do not *love him with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength*; such Love being necessarily productive of such Obedience: But if we do not love God *with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and*
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with all our Strength, we transgress the *First and Great Commandment* consequently we are guilty of a Sin of the *First Magnitude*; consequently we are liable to the Punishment due to that Sin; and consequently deserve to lose Happiness in this World, and in the next, and to become Miserable in both.

In short then; the Way to be Happy on Earth and in Heaven, is to *do the Will of God on Earth as it is done in Heaven*; that is, with all possible Willingness and Alacrity; agreeable to that excellent Advice of King *David* to his Son *Solomon*, *1 Chron. xxviii. 9. And thou Solomon, my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind; for the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.* Which Consideration ought to move us.

Thirdly, To do our Duty with Sincerity: I mean according to the best of our Abilities, with an honest Intention of pleasing God, advancing his Glory, and *working out our own Salvation*. If this Qualification of Sincerity doth accompany the Performance of our Duty, God will mercifully accept of it for the Sake of our blessed Redeemer's Merits notwithstanding

ing those Infirmities and Defects under which it will continually labour in this imperfect State.

But if Sincerity be wanting; if we practise the Duties of Christianity only, in order to obtain the Praise of Men; or for the Maintenance or Increase of our secular Interest; if *these*, or such as these, be the principal Motives or Ends of our Actions and Behaviour, God will be sure to reject them with Indignation and Hatred; and our own Hearts will frequently condemn us for our vile Hypocrisy.

Let none of us, therefore, put on the Vizard of Holiness to further ambitious and worldly Designs; for the Consciousness of Insincerity will discompose the Peace of our Minds; and how well soever a fair Covering may conceal our Intentions from Men, it cannot hide them from God's All-piercing Eye. He beholds the secret Springs of every Action, and is privy to the inmost Thoughts and Purposes of the Soul; and accordingly if he finds them Honest and Sincere, he will confer upon us the *Blessing* of true Believers; but if the contrary, he will appoint us the *Cursed Portion* of false-hearted Hypocrites.

Fourthly, Our Duty must be done with Perseverance: If we would be constantly
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Happy, we must be constantly Obedient; for Happiness being to be found only in *the Way of Righteousness*, as soon as we forsake *that*, we shall begin to be Miserable.

And as to what Concerns an *Hereafter*; our *labouring in the Work of the Lord will be in vain*, unless we finally persist in it; Nay, we had better not discard our Sins at all, nor ever enter into the Paths of Virtue; than after having done so for a while to *draw back*, and like the Dog return to our Vomit again, or with the Sow that is washed, to our wallowing in the Mire; for if after we have escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, we are again entangled therein and overcome, the Last State of us, will be worse than the First.

'Tis not enough, therefore, to do our Duty only for a Month; for a Year; or any other Period of Time, except that which is also a Period to our Lives. As we enter in at the *Strait Gate*, begin a religious Course; so we must be still going forward in the narrow Way; still pressing towards the Mark; still aspiring after Perfection; until God is pleased to stop our Progress himself, by calling us to descend
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into the Chambers of Mortality: So we shall assuredly receive the invaluable *Prize of our high Vocation*; so we shall be satisfied with that perfect Holiness and Bliss, after which our Souls incessantly panted. And so much may suffice for the *third* Thing propounded, which was to enquire *how* our Duty must be done, in order to make us Happy.

Since then in my former Discourse, I have set before you; First of all, the Necessity of Christian Practice, in order to Happiness; and Secondly, the Certainty of Happiness upon Christian Practice: Since in my present Discourse, I have Thirdly declared to you, those Qualifications, which are essentially requisite in such a Practice: I may now proceed in the

Last Place, to observe to you, what Influence the Doctrines delivered under the foregoing Heads, ought to have upon our Hearts and Lives.

And First, the Necessity of *doing* our Duty, in order to the Attainment of Happiness, should antidote us against the poisonous Contagion of those Persons, who regard little more than the *knowledge* of it.

This Remark cannot appear unreasonable to any one that is at all acquainted with the World; for though perhaps there

there are *few or none* who heartily Believe, that Knowledge alone will be available towards Happiness and Salvation; yet there are *many* who live as if they did so believe. How very common is it with those who are sufficiently endued with the Knowledge of their Duty, to let their Behaviour thwart and contradict it? How often do they dispute for the Truths of Religion, and enervate their own Arguments by their impious Conversation? How ready are they upon all Occasions to insinuate their Understanding in *the deep Things of the Spirit*, and yet constantly stupify themselves in the Pleasures of Flesh and Sense? Such Proceedings as these are but too visible; they spread far and wide, which shows their infectious Nature: But they could never be so rise among us, were we cordially persuaded that *Christian Practice* is as necessary to our Happiness as *Christian Knowledge*; and that *This alone* will but serve to enhance our Misery; because Happiness and Misery being Objects, the One of our warmest Desire; the other of our most unconquerable Antipathy; we should naturally Pursue and Embrace, that which we really thought was Conducive or Necessary to the Former; and carefully be-

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ware of that which we really thought would betray us to the Latter.

Whenever therefore we are solicited to rest in a bare Knowledge of our Duty, let us seriously ponder how destructive of Felicity, such a Confidence will prove; what a deal of Woe it must certainly give Birth to; and then, by God's Assistance, we shall easily repel the Temptation; we shall *become Doers of the Work, and not Knowers, only Deceiving our ourselves.*

Secondly, The Certainty of Happiness upon Christian Practice, ought to fill our Hearts with Thankfulness to God, and make *all that is within us Bless his holy Name.* For he, having an absolute Dominion over us, might have laid upon us what Commands he pleased, without annexing *any* Reward to the Performance of them; and we should have been under an Obligation to Obedience, although we were to be no more conscious of any Profit redounding therefrom, than the Parts of insensible Matter are, from obeying the Impulses of the supreme Mind. Since then, God hath not dealt with us in *this* Manner, but hath rendered the Obedience of his Laws highly advantageous, by linking our Duty and Happiness so closely together, that we cannot fail of being happy;

happy, if we do our Duty; this calls loudly upon us *to magnify him as long as we live, to pay him the Tribute of hearty Praise, as long as we have any Being.*

Thirdly and Lastly; It being Necessary, in order to Happiness, that our Duty should be performed in such a Manner, as I described under my Third general Head; this strongly engages our Care and Industry *so* to perform it, that we may thereupon be sure of obtaining Happiness. I would not be understood here, as if I thought an universal, willing, sincere, and persevering Obedience, could merit the Reward of Happiness at God's Hands; no; For *when we have done all that is commanded us, we shall have done no more than our Duty;* and though we do it in the best Manner we can, yet we shall *offend in many Things;* so that the Reward of it must be reckoned of *Grace,* not of *Debt.*

There are none of us that have any just Reason to *Glory in the Presence of God,* upon account of our Obedience. The Obedience of the most Holy is very imperfect; and will never be accepted, but for the Sake of CHRIST JESUS, *who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemp-*

tion; and therefore we must rely only upon his Righteousness and Merits for Salvation: *that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

When therefore I say, we are strongly engaged to perform our Duty in such a Manner as I have described, that we may thereupon be sure of obtaining Happiness; my Meaning is, that since God hath required, that the Practice of our Duty should have the fore-mentioned Quallifications, we are as strongly obliged, *so* as to qualify it, as if it was the very Price of Felicity; and if our Deportment is *thus* qualified, we may firmly depend upon the Faithfulness of God, for the certain Enjoyment of *that* Happiness which he has promised to *such* a Deportment.

Let it then be our constant Care to have our Souls possessed with a right Knowledge of our Duty. Let us diligently consider what Points God has revealed as Objects of Faith, for *them* it is our Duty to believe: What Precepts he has given us to perform, for *them* it is our Duty to practise: What Irregularities he has forbidden, and cautioned us against, for *them* it is our Duty to avoid.

To conclude all: *Whatsoever Things are true; whatsoever Things are honest; what-*

whatsoever Things are just; whatsoever Things are pure; whatsoever Things are lovely; whatsoever Things are of good Report; if we have any true Concern for our present or future Welfare, let us willingly embrace, and sincerely practise these Things: Let us Persevere in doing so unto the End, and then we shall be saved; let us continue Faithful unto Death, and then God will give us a Crown of Life.

SERMON X.

Psalm xcvi. 9.

O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness.

WHOEVER reflecteth upon the Nature, Inclination, and Capacity, of that Multitude of Creatures which inhabit this lower World, may soon find, that *Man* alone hath the Privilege of tracing out the Original of his Being; and forming any Notion of a God who was the Author of it.

Other Creatures, we may likewise see,
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are wholly enslaved to their Senses, and what seems at present agreeable or disagreeable to *them*, they follow, or avoid; without thinking of the Damage or Advantage which may afterwards come from doing so. But *we*, by the Help of that heaven-born Principle of Reason which is in us, can look forward into the Consequences and Issues of Things; and so forego a present Good, and undergo a present Evil, in order to the Promotion of future Happiness, and Prevention of future Misery.

These, and many more, are Blessings and Favours which are *peculiar* to the Race of Mankind; and therefore we must needs reckon it most reasonable and just, to make all possible Returns to the Giver of them. Since we are capable of discovering a great Measure of God's incomprehensible Glories and Perfections, from the inexhaustible Fountain of which, all the Benefits that we *have* enjoyed, *do*, or *may* enjoy must flow; it cannot be denied to be our bounden Duty, constantly to praise, magnify, and adore him.

And as we are thus informed of our Duty to worship God, by the Principles of right Reason or *natural Religion*; so we are instructed *how* to perform this Duty,

Duty, in a Manner acceptable to him, by *the Revelations* he hath been pleased to make of his Will. What that Manner is, I shall endeavour to make out in my following Discourse: For which Purpose I have chosen these Words of the *Psalmist*; *O worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness.* In discoursing from which, I design in the

First Place, To show how we are to behave ourselves, in order to Worship God in the Beauty of Holiness. And

Secondly, To lay down some Motives, earnestly to persuade us so to Worship him.

But before I enter upon either of these Heads, I think it convenient to premise something concerning the Nature of the Worship of God. The Worship of God then in a *large* Sense, doth signify, The Whole Duty of Man, comprehending in it Justice, Charity, and Sobriety. All these, being commanded by God, do become part of that Honour and Worship which are due to him. But in a more *restrain'd* Sense it is taken for that Part of our Duty, which *immediately and directly* relateth to God; and is employed in acknowledging his infinite and unbounded Excellencies;

cies; in praising him for the Blessings he hath *already* given us; and in begging of him whatsoever we *still* stand in need of. In *these*, and such like Acts and Exercises the Worship of God in this *restrained* Sense doth consist.

And it is distinguished into *Private* and *Public*. Which Distinction is not founded upon any *essential* Difference that is between them, but upon the Variety of Circumstances belonging to either: The one being performed by a Man when he is alone in his Chamber, Closet, or any other Place which he thinks fit. The other in the Company of more Persons, either in ones own Family, or in the Church.

In what I shall now deliver, I shall chiefly regard that Worship which we pay to God *publicly* in those Houses which are dedicated to his Honour and Service; though it will in a great Measure be *like-wise* applicable to that Worship we perform in our Families, or in any other more *private* Retirement.

This being premis'd, I go on to the *First* Thing propounded, namely, to shew how we are to behave ourselves in order to *Worship God in the Beauty of Holiness*. By the Beauty of Holiness David, I suppose, did *principally* intend, that
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Holy Tabernacle which he had made, and richly adorned, to be a Place of Residence for God's sacred Ark; upon the Translation of which into it this *Psalms* was composed. And indeed the *Seventy* seem to speak the same Thing; for by them my Text is rendered; Προσκυνήσατε τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐν αὐλῇ ἁγίᾳ αὐτοῦ; Worship the Lord in his Holy Court, or in his Holy House. So that if the Words are considered in this Light, then by Worshipping God in the Beauty of Holiness is meant the *publick* Worshipping him, in those Holy Places which are set apart for his *publick* Worship: As also that we should keep those Holy Places as neat and handsome as we can, and never grudge the best owing a little Money to preserve them from Ruin, Dirt, and Nastiness.

These Things are naturally suggested to us from the primary Signification of the Text. But I shall take the Liberty to understand it also, as having reference to the decent and orderly *Manner* of performing God's Worship, as well as to the *Place* wherein it is to be performed.

Secondly, Therefore, in order to *Worship* God in the Beauty of Holiness, we must worship him with Souls beautified with true Holiness. God is a Being of infinite
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and transcendent Holiness himself, and is very much displeased to have the Resemblance of it wanting in others. He is the Lover of those alone who *are Holy as he is Holy*, and therefore 'tis the Worship of those alone that he takes Delight in. The Thanksgivings which Men offer whilst their Hearts remain unsanctified, he reckons no better than *vain Oblations*; The Supplications which they *then* make are abominable in his Sight. The Worship of Hypocrites is most odious and ugly; and there is nothing more offensive to *the High and Holy one, who inhabiteth Eternity*, than to see those Men pretending to be pious and devout on a *Sunday*, who have little or no Regard to Justice, and Charity, Temperance, and Sobriety, and the other Duties of Religion, *all the Week besides*. And yet alas! 'tis to be feared there are many sad Wretches of *this Stamp*. 'Tis to be feared there are many who defraud their Neighbours; who debauch themselves; and forget their God upon the *Working Days*, and yet think all will be well with them, if they come to Church on *the Lord's Day*.

Let such Persons know that *God is not to be mock'd*: He sees their hollow Hearts, and deceitful Doings; he sees their inward
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Pollution and Uncleanness, and therefore will look upon their *outward* Worship with the utmost Abhorrence and Detestation. *This* they may learn from what David says, *Pſalm lxxvi. 18. If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not bear me.* *This* they may learn from what Solomon says, *Prov. xv. 8. The Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.* And *This* they may likewise learn from that angry Relentment which God himself expreſſes by the Prophet *Iſaiab*, concerning the Worship of the *Jews*, during their Continuance in Wickedneſs. *Iſa. i. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. To what Purpoſe is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? ſaith the Lord: I am full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of ſed Beaſts; and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your Hands, to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain Ob- lations; Incenſe is an Abomination to me; the New-Moons, and Sabbaths, the Calling of Aſſemblies I cannot away with, it is Iniquity, even the ſolemn Meeting. Your New-Moons, and your appointed Feaſts my Soul hateth, they are a Trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them; and*

and when ye spread forth your Hands, I will hide my Eyes from you; yea, when you ma'e many Prayers, I will not bear, your Hands are full of Blood. Here we may see, that though God himself instituted Sacrifices, and Burn Offerings of Beasts among the *Jews*; and commanded them to observe Sabbaths, and divers other Feasts; yet, because they had not purg'd themselves from their Iniquities, he plainly intimates to them, that he would not have any Regard to their Worship as would turn to their Advantage, but rather quite the contrary. And *so* he will deal with us *Christians* too, unless we give a Bill of Divorce to *all* our beloved Sins before we presume to come unto the Throne of Grace.

I cannot therefore address myself to you better upon this Occasion, than in the 16th and 17th Verses of the Chapter now quoted. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings; cease to do Evil, learn to do Well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow.*

If we do so, then our Requests and Supplications will ascend to the *Mercy-Seat*, and avail us for the obtaining all Things that be needful.

If we do so, then our Praises and Thanksgivings will be *Odours of a sweet Smell, Sacrifices acceptable and well-pleasing.*

If we do so, then our *Divine Service* will be *reasonable, lovely, and delightful*, and we shall go the direct Way to *worship God in the Beauty of Holiness.*

An Assembly of devout Worshippers, *thus* purified from the Defilements of Sin, and adorned with universal Holiness, are a beautiful Representation of *the innumerable Company* of Saints and Angels in Heaven; and will be sure to have *the Eyes of God* graciously over them, and *his Ears open* unto their Prayers. God is a most pure and perfect Spirit, and therefore will have Pleasure in such Worshipers, and such only, as do *thus worship him in Spirit, and in Truth.*

Thirdly, In order to *worship God in the Beauty of Holiness*, we must worship him with such decent and humble Postures of our *Bodies* as may in some sort express that holy and profound Reverence we ought to have of his tremendous Majesty in our *Minds*. God created the Body as well as the Soul: CHRIST redeem'd the Body as well as the Soul: And hereafter he will glorify the Body as well as the Soul. And therefore we must worship and glo-

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rify God with our Bodies as well as with our Souls.

Now the *reverential* Posture of Body; which we find most generally recommended in the Scriptures, is *kneeling*. Thus we hear the royal *Psalmist* exhorting, *Psalm* xcvi. 6. *O come let us worship; and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.* And thus 'tis recorded of our blessed Saviour, that he *kneeled down and prayed*, *Luke* xxii. 41. Thus likewise we read in the *Acts of the Apostles*, concerning St *Stephen*, St *Peter*, and St *Paul*; that they *kneeled down, and prayed*. And the same Practice of other holy Persons, we may find in other Places of Holy Writ. Agreeably to which our Church hath chiefly prescribed us *this* Posture, in the *Rubrick* of the *Common Prayer*. And if we would all devoutly use This, and the other Posture of *Standing*, according as we are directed, how beautiful would the Manner of our Worship be?

But what an ugly Thing is it for any one to chuse to be *sitting* when he Pretends to be at Prayers. This is such a disagreeable Token of Indecency and Irreverence as cannot but raise the Indignation of all truly pious Men. What, is it not enough for God to condescend to permit

permit us to speak to him, but must we treat him at a bold and familiar Rate, as if he was *such a one as ourselves*? If we are admitted to petition any thing of a *King*, we are obliged to kneel before him; and shall we not be willing to show as much Reverence when we are addressing ourselves to the *KING of Kings*? Those who be not, are guilty of a very great and impious Absurdity; and of such Persons it may be said, that they delight to worship God rather in the Deformity, than in the Beauty of Holiness.

Fourthly, In order to worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, we must worship him with fervent Zeal: We must keep our Hearts with all Diligence, from wandering to other Subjects, and put up our Petitions and Thanksgivings with very great Importunity and Earnestness.

The old *Heathens* were so sensible, how necessary *This* was in order to a decent Performance of Worship, that they appointed an ^k Officer on Purpose to make People mind what they were about, when they were sacrificing to their *false* Gods: And certainly we can't be said to worship

^k Dr. Kennet's Roman Antiquities, Part II. Book 2. Chap. 8. Bishop Potter's Greek Antiquities, Vol. I. Book 2. Chap. 14.

the *true one* in the Beauty of Holiness, if we be not as diligently attentive as *they* were. No, it is exceedingly far from worshipping God in the Beauty of Holiness, to worship him as it were by Rote: Neither is it reasonable to think that he will answer those Prayers, which are said after such a cold and sleepy Manner, as if we did not care whether they were answered or no. The Way to procure God's Favour and Love, is *to draw near to him* with our *Hearts*, as well as with our *Tongues*; not only to cry, but to *cry mightily unto him*. Vehemency and Fervour are both *Helps* and *Ornaments* to Devotion, they do at once *beautify* and *strengthen* it, they pierce the Heavens, and offer an holy Violence to the Divine Majesty. When our Worship is *thus* performed, as one of the Antients speaketh, It conquers the unconquerable, and overpowers the Omnipotent. And such Violence and Importunity as this is grateful and pleasing to God.

Lastly, In order to worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, we must worship him with Regularity and Uniformity: By which I would signify, that we must *orderly* join in the Divine Service from the Beginning to the End. By coming to Church after

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it is begun, or not joining in it according to Rule, we break that Decorum, Symmetry, and Proportion, which should be observed *by us*, and consequently lessen the Beauty of our Worship. For *hereby* the Devotion of *other* Men is disturbed, and our *own* is maimed. And if we consider how strictly the *Jews* were forbidden to sacrifice any Beast that was blemished, maimed, or any Ways imperfect; and how angry the Prophet *Malachy*, in the 1st Chapter of his Prophecy, represents God at the bringing of such Oblations, 'twill appear reasonable to conclude, that he will not at all like our *Spiritual* Sacrifices, unless we endeavour all we can to offer them *whole and entire*.

But now if we come *early* to God's House, *watch at his Gates, and wait at the Posts of his Doors*; if we all begin our Prayers together, and join in every Part of them according as we are directed; this will be highly pleasing to Almighty God, and make our holy Worship extremely beautiful: This will prevent all Discord from arising in our Churches, and fill them with a pleasant and delightful Harmony.

If we are attentively devout in Silence when the Minister only should speak,

how decent will the Silence be! how awful the Attention! And if we express a becoming Fervour when all our Voices should be heard, how lovely will be the Union! how glorious the Symphony!

By *thus* behaving, ourselves, we shall cause the Worship of God to be a *Delight*, and render *the Dwellings of the Lord of Hosts* exceedingly *amiable*.

By *thus* behaving ourselves, we shall thoroughly conform to the primitive Church, in which all Things were *done* decently, and in Order as well as *prescribed* so: In which the united Voices of its Members were lifted up with so much Zeal, that the Sound of them was compared to the heavenly Thunder.

Nay, by *thus* behaving ourselves we shall bear a near Resemblance to the Church which is above; where St. *John* heard *the Voice of the great Multitude, as the Voice of many Waters, and as the Voice of mighty Thundrings*: Where the Divine Praises are celebrated with the exactest Regularity; and God is worshipped in the most perfect Beauty of Holiness.

I have now done with the *First Head* of Discourse, which was to show how we are to behave ourselves in order *to worship God in the Beauty of Holiness*.

From hence I pass on to the *Last Thing*

Thing proposed; namely, to lay down some Motives earnestly to persuade us *so to worship him*: That so we may *have a Desire and Longing to enter into the Courts of the Lord, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Temple*. And because Men are generally swayed in *other* Matters, by the Prospect of Profit, Honour, and Pleasure, and the Necessity of doing any Thing in order to their Well-being; I shall therefore endeavour to excite to the Practice of this Duty, by briefly showing;

First, That it is a Means whereby to get the greatest *Profit*.

Secondly, That it is the Way to obtain the highest *Honour*.

Thirdly, That it will fill us with the most exquisite *Pleasure*.

Lastly, That it is Necessary in order to our Well-being hereafter. And

First, To worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, is a Means whereby we may get the greatest *Profit*. We cannot get so great Profit by any Thing, as by that which will procure us all Things that be needful for our Bodies and Souls; but *this* the worshipping God in the Beauty of Holiness, will most certainly do. For if we worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, that supposes our Souls to be beautified with

with universal Holiness: And if our *Souls* are beautified with universal Holiness, that signifies that we are adorn'd with all Christian Graces, and Virtues: And if we are adorned with all Christian Graces and Virtues, then we shall put up our Petitions to God faithfully, according to his Will: And if we put up our Petition to God faithfully, according to his Will, he will be sure to answer them effectually, to the Relief of our Necessity, and for the setting forth of his own Glory. *Where two or three, or a greater Congregation are met to worship him in this Manner, he will not fail to be in the Midst of them, to hear their Supplications, and to supply their Wants. Those who thus devoutly ask Favours, shall receive them: Those who thus diligently seek goodly Pearls, shall find them: And those who thus importunately knock at Heavens Gate, shall at length have it opened unto them.*

In short; there is no Benefit so great, but we may acquire, no Danger so eminent, but we may prevent, by worshipping God in the Beauty of Holiness. We shall even out-do the Thundering Legion that is mentioned in Church History: We shall draw down upon ourselves heavenly Blessings,

sings, annoy and confound *Spiritual* Enemies.

Since therefore all *these* Things are to be done by worshipping God in the Beauty of Holiness, 'tis plain that from *thence* there will accrue to us the greatest *Profit*.

Secondly, To worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, is the Way to obtain the highest *Honour*. When we worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, we adore the boundless and immeasurable Excellencies of his Nature: We confess and recognize our eternal Dependance upon him: We praise him for his inestimable Goodness to us; and *declare the Wonders that he hath done, and doth do, for the Children of Men*. In *these* Exercises, we ascribe unto him the Glory which he deserves, we give him *the Honour which is due unto his Name*. Now nothing can be more certain, than that by doing *this*, we must obtain the highest *Honour* ourselves; because God hath expressly said, that *those who honour him, he will honour*. And how high a Degree of Glory must *they* be arrayed with, who shall be *cloathed upon* from Heaven! How vast an Honour must *they* possess, *whom* God will *delight to honour*!

Farthermore, when we worship God

in the Beauty of Holiness, we are employed in his immediate Service; and since it hath always been justly reckoned very honourable to have some Office near the Person of one of the Kings of the *Earth*, then doubtless it must be far *more* honourable to be employed in the immediate Service of *him*, by whom those *Kings* reign, and from whom they receive all their Honour and Authority.

Thirdly, To worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, will fill us with the most exquisite *Pleasure*. Pleasure is nothing else but that Satisfaction or Complacency which we perceive *in* us, when our Appetites are gratified with that which they desire. And because we all naturally desire Good, therefore the greater the Good that we desire is, the greater proportionably must our Pleasure be in the Enjoyment of it. Now the supreme, the greatest Good that is in the World, is God. And if we are truly holy (as we are supposed to be, if we worship God in the Beauty of Holiness) then we shall *really* esteem him to be so; this Estimation of our Judgments, will naturally beget a Choice of him in our Wills; and this Choice of him in our Wills, will as naturally produce a Desire of him, in our Affecti-

Affections; as it did in the holy Psalmist, who, inflam'd with this Affection, cryed out, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire in Comparison of thee.* So then if this Desire is gratified with the Enjoyment of him, we must necessarily be filled with a most *exquisite, and sublime* Pleasure, suitable to *such* an Enjoyment. But *this* Enjoyment of God we have, when we worship him in the Beauty of Holiness: For *then* we hold a near and sweet Communion with him: *Then* our Souls do as it were feast upon God, and God refreshes and entertains our Souls; and consequently *then* we cannot but feel a most exalted and inexpressible Delight: A Delight of the same Nature, with that which is imparted to the Saints in Heaven, from the like Enjoyment of the Divine Being. As we *Communicate* with those Saints in worshipping God, in the Beauty of Holiness, so we *have Fellowship* with them too in the happy Effects of it. Whilst *They* are solac'd with the immense *Pleasures*, which *are at God's right Hand* above, *We* are bless'd with a Participation of that *Fullness of Joy*, which doth always attend his more immediate *Presence* here below.

Lastly,

Lastly, To worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, is necessary in order to our Well-being *hereafter*. God hath often signified his Will to be worshipped so. This implies that we can worship him so; and therefore if we don't take care to worship so, we live in a Disobedience to his Will; and that is the ready Way to be excluded from his Kingdom hereafter; out of which we cannot possess the least Felicity, but must suffer the greatest Misery.

* Vain then, extremely vain and foolish, are the Fancies of those Men, who, if they pay some Regard to the Worship of God, think to fare well enough in another World, altho' they be not righteous in other Respects. And as vain are the Imaginations of others, who, if they be righteous in other Respects, think to fare well enough, altho' they neglect to worship God as they ought: For into Heaven will be admitted neither *godly* Knaves, nor *ungodly* honest Men. If ever we arrive at that blissful Place, we must walk in the Paths of *universal* Obedience; we must be *holy in all manner of Conversation, and Godliness*.

Well then; since it appears, that so great *Profit, Honour, and Pleasure*, will be

be conveyed to us by worshipping God in the Beauty of Holiness; and since it is so necessary in order to our future Well-being, let us embrace all opportunities of being exercised in it.

I need not I suppose exhort you here, to be frequent likewise in your *private* Devotions, that so you may worship God the more beautifully *in the Assembly of the faithful*; This, I say, I need not do now, because it is *virtually* contained in the Other. For, very certain it is that unless we *do* worship God devoutly *in Private*, we cannot be well deemed truly holy, and for that Reason, cannot worship him in the Beauty of Holiness in *Public*.

Let us then *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*. Let us praise him, and put up our Petitions to him, with *decent and humble Postures* of our *Bodies*; and with *Zeal, Fervour, and Attention* of our *Minds*. Let us *orderly* joyn in *all* the Parts of our Worship; and not maim our Service by *Sleeping, Inattention, or late Coming*. If we *thus* behave and qualify ourselves, then from Worshipping God in the Church Militant on Earth now, we shall be advanced to worship him in the Church

triumphant in Heaven hereafter, there to sing Hymns and Hallelujahs, to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

SERMON xi.

John iv. 7.

Beloved, let us love one another.

THESE are the Words of that Disciple whom JESUS loved: Whom the Saviour of the World, in a more peculiar Manner, placed his Affections upon; whom the great Lover of Souls, had a distinguishing Love and Kindness for.

And as the Author of my Text had this uncommon favour bestowed upon him; so he made what Requital he could by returning Love for Love; by loving his Lord as much as his enlarged Soul enabled him, tho' 'twas impossible he should ever love him, as much as he was beloved by him.

And as St John was thus eminently beloved by his Lord, and did thus entirely love him; so having perceived what a noble Pleasure and Delight, naturally flow'd from

from such *their* mutual Love, he knew that the like (though in an inferior Degree) would result to Christians from their *loving of one another*: And therefore he most frequently press'd home *this* Duty, both in his Sermons and Writings; that so his Hearers and Readers might be inclined to perform the same, and thereby reap that present, as well as future Reward, which attended it, become obedient and happy together.

Thus ^d Antiquity tells us, that when he liv'd at *Ephesus*, and was so old and weak, that he could hardly get to Church, though led by his Disciples; he did nothing but inculcate this Precept, little Children, love one another. And thus we find him (as in many other Parts of his Writings, so) in the Text before us, stirring up People to the same Duty in a like moving and endearing Manner: *Beloved, let us love one another.*

And certainly if there was Occasion, often to exhort Christians to this Duty in *his* Days, when they were remarkable for the Practice of it; there must needs be far greater Occasion to do it in the Times wherein we *now* live; when Multitudes of those, who pretend to be Disciples of

^d Hieron. com in 6 tum cap. Epist. ad Gal.

CHRIST, instead of being careful to exercise the Acts of Christian Love, do so commonly bring forth the Fruits of Hatred, Ill-nature, and Uncharitableness; that if a *Heathen* was to judge of their Religion by their Behaviour, he would conclude that it did not command them to love each other; or, at least, that they were very little acquainted with the Nature of such a Command. In discoursing therefore from these Words of the Apostle, I shall endeavour to do these two Things.

First, To explain the Duty of mutual Love. And,

Secondly, To enforce the Observance of it.

First, I am to explain the Duty of mutual Love. And I conceive the most natural, and therefore the most easy Way of performing this, will be to consider what are the several Properties of true Love, and apply them to our own Behaviour; and *thereby* we shall receive sufficient Instruction in the Mature of this excellent and important Duty.

Now though the Properties of Love are very various, according to that Variety of Objects about which it may be conversant; yet, as it respects our Fellow-creatures, the *inward* Acts of it may, if I mistake not, be reduced to these three.

First,

First, To place a due Value and Esteem upon them. And,

Secondly, To wish that no Evil may happen unto them. And,

Thirdly, To desire they may be blessed with Plenty of all Things that are good.

But then Love being one of the most active and busy Passions of the Soul, it will certainly flame out in sensible Demonstrations of Kindness towards the Persons beloved. It will not suffer us to rest contented with a secret Esteem of them; with a bare wishing them no Evil; or wishing them Well; But 'twill cause us to treat them in a Manner correspondent to our Thoughts of them. 'Twill for ever restrain us from doing them any Harm: 'Twill make us do them all the Good that lies in our Power: And forgive them whatsoever Injuries they may have offered, or done to us. So that if we don't *thus* demean ourselves towards others, it may without any Scruple be affirmed, that we have not an *heartly* Affection for them; because *this* will as surely manifest itself by *such* Tokens, as the Sun discovereth its Rising by the Light which it scatters; or as Fire proves its burning by the Warmth and Heat which it gives us. From all these Considerations put together, we may clearly see, that the Duty

of mutual Love doth consist;

First, In esteeming and treating each other according to the Dignity of our Natures.

Secondly, In doing and wishing one another no Evil.

Thirdly, In wishing and doing one another all the Good we can. And

Fourthly, In forgiving each other all Injuries that may have passed between us.

These are the constituent Parts of the Duty of true Christian Love; and though 'tis justifiable to have a greater *Degree* of Love for some Persons than for others; yet *these Acts* of it we are bound to exercise towards *All*, as *All* are bound to the Exercise of them. And

First, 'Tis *one* Part of this Duty of Christian Love, to esteem and treat each other according to the Dignity of our Natures. Although for the better Maintenance of Peace, and Order, in the World, God hath raised some Persons upon *higher* Ground than others; yet as to their *Nature*, and *Original*, they are *all* upon a *Level*. *All Men are made of one Blood*; they are *all* descended from the same common Progenitors; and are *all* Partakers of the Divine Image. Moreover, the Son of God vouchsafed a mysterious Union with the Nature of *all* Men; and

gave his Life a Ransom for all. Upon these Accounts every Man deserves to be greatly valued and esteemed by us: And this Debt of Esteem and Value which is owing to all Men, we shall most certainly discharge if we love them. This is the first and genuine Signification of the Word Charity, whereby a Thing is accounted dear or precious: And in this Sense doth our Saviour oppose despising to loving; *either^m, says he, he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: Contempt* of others therefore, being opposite to the *Love* of them, 'tis evident, that the *Love* of others must contain a just *Esteem* of them.

Love indeed, is rather apt to *Over-rate* the beloved Object, than to *disesteem* or *undervalue* it: Witness the vast Opinion it inclineth us to entertain of our own Worth, though never so unreasonably. If then we are Obedient to the Voice of Reason, we cannot, but acknowledge, that the Duty of loving others doth oblige us to place a due Value and Esteem upon *them*; agreeable to that Exhortation, we read in *Rom. xii. 10.* *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love, in Honour, preferring one another.*

Now

Now

Now the natural Effect of this *Esteem* of our Brethren must be a courteous and civil *Treatment* of them. As Love brings into our Minds, worthy Opinions of others, so 'twill make our Speech, and Actions agree thereunto: Our Language will be soft and kind; our Looks smiling and pleasant, and our whole Carriage towards them, will be winning, humble, and obliging. A morose and surly Temper, an imperious, haughty, and scornful Behaviour, are utterly inconsistent with the Duty of Christian Love, for *Love vaunteth itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly*. It will not allow us to deport ourselves disdainfully towards any one: 'Twill make us affable and condescending to *all* Degrees of Men from the highest to the lowest; as well to him who dwelleth in a Cottage, as to him that inhabiteth a Palace; as well to him that wears the vilest Garments, and lives upon the coarsest Diet, as to *him that is cloathed with Purple and fine Linnen, and fareth sumptuously every Day*.

Secondly, A N O T H E R Part of this Christian Duty, is to do and wish one another no Evil. *Love*, saith *St. Paul* in ^a one Place, *worketh no Evil to his Neigh-*

^a Rom. xiii. 10.

bour;

bear; and in ° another Place, *Love thinketh no Evil*. Nothing is more contrary to the Spirit of Christian Love, than the *Leven* of Rage, of Envy, of Malice, and Ill-nature. When these hellish Qualities are predominant, they *Sowre* the Minds of Men, and prompt them to wrong their Brethren upon every Opportunity: They render us impatient under Injuries, and Affronts; and hasty to return *Evil for Evil*: They make us repine at the Favours which Providence hath bestowed upon others; and incline us to wish, contrive, work, and be glad at the Loss, or Abatement of them.

But if the Spirit of Christian Love doth enter into the Soul, and reside there, it will eternally banish all these monstrous Properties, and introduce into their Room the most inoffensive and agreeable. *Then* we shall *endure the Contradictions*, the Reproaches, the Abuses of Sinners without flying into Fury; without retaliating; without permitting our Resentments to carry us to the Commission of any Thing that is sinful. *Then* we shall not murmur, and look askint at the Blessings which others are encircled with; nor taste any Sweetness in seeing them drink of the bit-

ter Cup of Affliction: We shall rather be forward to sympathize with them in their several Conditions, *rejoice with those* whom the Smiles of God have given Occasion to *rejoice, and weep with those* whom Frowns have caused to *Weep*.

If we love our Brethren in such a sincere Manner as we ought, no Temptations will prevail with us to bring any *natural* Evil upon their Bodies, by open, or secret Mischief. Neither shall we be instrumental in bringing any *moral* Evil upon their Souls, by persuading them to Sin, or arguing them into Error. So far will Christian Love keep us from *working* any Evil to our Neighbours, that we shall never *devise* any against them. So far will it keep us from *devising* any Evil against them, that we shall not so much as wish them any: And so far will it keep us from wishing them any Evil, that we shall wish *no Evil may happen unto them, nor any Plague come nigh their Dwelling*. And so far will it raise us above wishing them no Evil, that we shall become humble *Intercessors to God* for them, and earnestly intreat the Preserver of Mankind to *deliver T H E M, as well as O U R. S E L V E S, from Evil*.

Evil as such, is what all Men have an inbred

bred Prejudice against: This makes us always refuse it, and endeavour to fence it off. Very true indeed it is, that we frequently follow, and embrace that which is *really* Evil: But then it must also be confessed, that we neither follow nor embrace it under the *Notion* of Evil: No, we are misled by a false Judgment; we are smitten with a fair Appearance of *Good*; and 'tis *That* which we propose to ourselves in our Pursuit and Embraces: 'Tis the *Bait* that we so eagerly chop at; the Hook, or the Snare, we have not any Appetite to.

For any one to seek Evil for *itself*, for its *own* Sake, abstracted from the Consideration of all kind of Advantage, is no less impossible than for a Stone naturally to move upwards: As such a Motion is contrary to the Principle of Heaviness lodged in that Body, or to the attractive Force of the Earth, which has an Influence upon it; so to seek Evil as Evil, is in effect to hate ourselves, and therefore contrary to the Principle of Self-love, which God has *engraven* upon every Man's Heart, as *with the Point of a Diamond*. This Principle of Self-love will not suffer us to *Wish*; or knowingly and willfully to *Do* ourselves Hurt: It puts us upon arming against, and deprecating whatsoever we count Evil or Mischievous.

Now

Now both *Moses* and *CHRIST*, both Law and Gospel have made the Love of ourselves, the Rule by which we are to be guided in loving our Neighbour: For thus it is written, *Lev. xix. 18. Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thyself*: And *Matth. xxii. 39.* Our Saviour reinforces this Precept, saying, *Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thyself.*

Since therefore *Self-love* causeth us to hate that which is Evil; since it will not allow us to design *ourselves* Mischief; since it makes us watch *against*; and desire it may *never* befall us; 'tis plain, that the Love of our *Neighbours* must oblige us to abstain from doing *them* any Evil; and also to *wish* them none; because we are commanded to love *them* with the same kind of Love, as that wherewith we love *ourselves*.

Doth it then go much against the Grain, to have any Thing we say or do, construed in the *worse* Sense? Are we not apt to take it ill, that our best Actions should be imputed to bad Causes? or that we should be suspected of having *evil* Intentions, when our outward Behaviour is confessedly *praise worthy*? Doth *Self-love* render us unwilling to have that *Honour* withheld from us, which is due to our

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Characters? Doth it make us averſe from ſuſtaining any Damage in our *Perſons*? From having our Marriage-Beds defiled by *Adultery*? Or our Properties invaded by *Robbery*? Or our Reputations tarniſhed by *Evil-speaking, Slander, and Detraction*? Doth *Self-love*, I ſay, render us unwilling to be injured by *others*? Doth it altogether indiſpoſe us to injure *ourſelves*? Doth it make us wiſh ourſelves no Evil or Injury in *theſe*, and *all other* Reſpects? So muſt the *Love of our Neighbours* hinder us from injuring *them* any Ways, and make us *wiſh* them no Evil or Injury; otherwiſe we don't love *them* as we love *ourſelves*, and conſequently do not love them as we *ought*. I ſhall finiſh this Point, with the Words of *Zachariah* Chap. viii. Ver. 17. *Let none of you imagine Evil in your Hearts againſt his Neighbour, for this is a Thing that I hate, ſaith the Lord.*

Thirdly, Another Part of this Duty of Chriſtian Love, is to wiſh, and do one another all the *Good* we can. In that Deſcription of Love, which the Scriptures have delivered unto us, *Love is ſaid to be kind*: Now Kindneſs doth conſiſt in wiſhing and doing *Good* to others, and

^e 1 Cor. xiii. 14.

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therefore it must needs be a Part of *Love* to do so likewise.

Without *this Proof of the Sincerity of our Love*, the fairest Pretences, the most solemn Protestations are vain and deceitful: For the Duty of Christian Love to others is not sufficiently discharged by giving them good *Words*, and *Looks*; or by wishing, and doing them no *Evil*: It requireth us also to be *Benevolent*, and *Benevolent*. It obligeth us to desire their Happiness and Prosperity; and to *accomplish that Desire*, as far as our Capacities empower us. We must be rich in good *Works*, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. We must supplicate our Heavenly Father, for the *spiritual* and *temporal* Welfare of our Brethren; and conduce what in us lies to the Advancement of *Both*: By giving Instruction to the ignorant; by Comforting the Feeble-minded; by Endeavouring to reclaim the Vicious; by Encouraging the Virtuous; by Succouring the Oppressed; by *Feeding the Hungry*; by *Cloathing the Naked*; by being forward to do kind Offices to *all Men*; by Administring to *every one* according as *their* several Necessities, and *our* several Circumstances do require, and enable us. Hereby we shall evidence our

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Professions of Love to be without *Disimulation*; hereby we shall show that we love in Deed, and in Truth, and not only in Word and in Tongue. And whosoever hath this World's Good; whosoever is entrusted with any Talent by Almighty God, and refuseth in Proportion to what he hath to be useful or assistant to him to him that needeth; in that Person dwelleth neither the Love of God, nor the Love of his Neighbour.

Fourthly, It is a Part of this Christian Duty, to forgive each other all Injuries that may have pass'd between us. Such is the Weakness and Imperfection of human Nature; so many, and great are the Provocations we meet with; as make it more than probable, that Quarrels will sometime or other arise, and Injuries be offer'd, and done: But then 'tis the Business of Christian Love to moderate and suppress the Passion of Anger, lest it should prove an Occasion of Sin, either by its Violence, or Continuance; either by hurrying us to render Evil for Evil, and Railing for Railing; or by letting the Sun go down, before we are appeased. And if we cannot patiently bear with each others Failings and Infirmities; if we cannot pass by Injuries; and put up

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Affronts,

Affronts, without revenging them; we
 act not in Conformity to the Precepts of
 our Religion; we are destitute of true
 brotherly Love. For thus saith St Paul
Eph. iv. 1, 2. I beseech you, that we
 walk worthy of the Vocation, wherewith
 ye are called; with all Lowliness, and
 Meekness, with long suffering, forbear-
 ing one another in Love. And again *Col.*
iii. 12, 18. Put on (as the Elect of God,
 holy, and beloved) Bowels of Mercies,
 Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meek-
 ness, Long suffering; forbearing one ano-
 ther, and forgiving one another, if any
 Man have Quarrel against any; even as
CHRIST forgave you, so also do ye. As
CHRIST forgives us universally, and sin-
 cerely, so as never to upbraid us with the
 Faults he hath forgiven; so doth the
 Duty of Christian Love, oblige us to for-
 give one another in the same Manner.
 As **CHRIST**'s Forgiveness of Sinners, doth
 not only free them from Punishment, but
 is also followed with the greatest Rewards
 and Blessings; so should our Forgiveness
 of our offending Brethren be manifested
 by returning Civilities for Rudenesses;
 by repaying Injuries with Benefits.

This being a Duty to which the cor-
 rupt Nature of Man is very backward,
 our

our Saviour hath frequently repeated the Command of it; and made it one of the indispensable Conditions, upon which we are to expect Forgiveness from God. To this Purpose he speaks, *Matt. v. 44. Bless them that curse you, do Good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you.* And again *Matt. vi. 15. If you forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your Trespases.* So that by being malicious and revengeful, by not fully and heartily forgiving our Brethren those Offences, which they commit against us; we deprive ourselves of Forgiveness from God, for those Offences which we commit against him: And every time we say the Lord's Prayer, whilst we continue in such a devilish State, we pray for a Curse instead of a Blessing.

They would do well to reflect upon these Considerations, who won't be pacified unless they have *an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth*; unless they injure their Neighbours, as much as their Neighbours have injured them.

They would do well to reflect upon these Considerations, who delight to sow *Discord among Brethren*, who foment

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and cherish Differences among Neighbours, instead of trying to compose them.

They likewise would do well to consider seriously of *these* Things, who presently run to the Magistrate for the Redress of every petty and frivolous Damage which they receive: Or, who, in Matters of greater Moment, in which, without doubt, 'tis justifiable to maintain, or recover ones right, by Law; I say, who, in *such* Cases will not debate the Point in a civil Manner, or won't be Friends with each other after their Controversies are decided.

Men of *these* Practices are very far from exercising the Duty of Christian Love towards their Brethren; they behave not themselves as become the Disciples of the Blessed Jesus; but if as they were ambitious of being like the implacable spiritual *Adversary* of Souls, *who walketh about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

I have now gone over my first Head of Discourse; which was to explain the Duty of mutual Love. In which Explanation you may observe, that I have all along spoken only of the Love of *Benevolence*, in Contradistinction to the Love of *Complacency and Delight*: The Reason is; because,

because, I conceive, 'tis *that* Love only which we are enjoined to exercise towards *all* Men: It being *unjustifiable* to have a Love of Complacency for Men of a wicked and debauched Conversation; and *impossible* to have it for those who employ themselves in plotting our Destruction, or doing us Mischief. The Benignity of the *Divine* Nature, which is proposed to our Imitation, doth not arise to this Height: For though *God maketh his Sun to shine upon the Evil; and sendeth Rain upon the Unjust; and desireth not the Death of a Sinner; but rather that he may turn from his Wickedness, and live;* yet he doth not *delight and take Pleasure* in him, whilst he goes on in his Sins.

Again, I have omitted the Mention of one *Act* of Love, urged in the Scripture; to wit, *the laying down our Lives for the Brethren*: Because my Purpose being to recommend those *common* Acts of Love, which we are bound to exercise in the *ordinary* Course of our Lives, I had no Occasion to take Notice of that *extraordinary* Act of Love, to which I reckon we are obliged only in a Time of Persecution; or when the Glo-

ry of God, and his Church's Edification do necessarily require it.

I Think it is likewise proper, upon Account of that vile, niggardly, contracting Temper, which prevails in the World, to put you in mind once more; that those Acts of Christian Love which I have enlarged upon, are not to be limited to our *own* Party; or to those who return our Love; but are to be extended to *all Man'ind*, to every individual, or distinct Branch of that Species.

Though *this* is no new Doctrine, but the same that was taught by CHRIST, and his Apostles; yet 'tis very much disregarded among Christians. Nothing is more common with them, than to confine their Love to *themselves*, or those of their *own* Persuasion: As for others, who disagree with them in Points of Religion; or even in Matters of Policy; they too often treat them with great Dis-esteem and Ill-nature. In their Discourses, indeed, they'll pretend to *have Charity* for such Persons; but their general Practice gives their Speech the Lie: For how ready are they to lay hold of all Occasions to vilify and asperse them? How *unwilling* are they to show them *a kind Office*? Yea, how *glad* do they seem of an Opportunity to do them a *Diservice*?

In short, they make their *Opinions* the Rule of their Approbation and Dislike : If one thinks as they do, he shall be called a very honest Man; and be recommended, favoured, and assisted by them, as such: But if ones Thoughts of Things, of Persons, of Practices are different from theirs; he shall hardly be counted worthy to be trusted, to be respected, or obliged. And how, I pray, do *these* Proceedings agree with that Description of Charity or Love, which St. *Paul* has left us in the 13th Chap. of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*? How do they agree with those Injunctions ^p elsewhere, of *honouring all Men? Doing Good to all Men? Speaking Evil of no Man? And rendring to none Evil for Evil?*

Some Persons may perhaps think to screen themselves from all this; and attempt to defend their Uncharitableness towards others of different Persuasions, from that Passage in the 2d Epistle of St. *John*, at the 10th Verse; where 'tis said, *If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, receive him not into your House, neither bid him God speed.*

But not to mention that those Words had a *peculiar* Relation to a very bad Sort

^p 1 Pet. ii. 17. Gal. vi. 10. Tit. iii. 2. 1 Thes. v. 15.

of Hereticks who lived in the Apostle's Time; they only forbid such a Familiarity and Communication with such Persons as *countenances* their Opinions, or *ensnares* Us to the like; as may be hinted in the 11th Verse of that Epistle; *He that bid-eth him God speed, is Partaker of his evil Deeds*: But certainly 'tis possible to exercise the Acts of Love and *Good-will towards Men*, without encouraging their Errors; or embracing the same ourselves.

And that neither *This*, nor any *Other* Passage of Scripture, can *justly* be pleaded in Defence of Dissaffection and Ill-nature, towards those whose Principles disagree with our own; is undeniably manifest from the Parable of the *Samaritan* and the *Jew*, which we meet with in the 10th Chap. of St. *Luke*. For though the Enmity between the *Samaritans* and the *Jews*, upon Account of religious Worship, was so very great, that we read, *The Jews had no Dealings with the Samaritans*; yet to declare the Universality of Christian Love, and how we are to understand the Word *Neighbour*: Our Saviour introduces *one* of these, expressing the greatest Kindness, and shewing the tenderest Pity and Compassion on the *Other*: And if we would love our Neigh-
bours

hours as ourselves, we must go *and do so likewise.*

No Difference therefore in Opinion; no bad Usage we receive from others; nor any Reason besides can excuse us for not loving them. The most ungrateful Wretch; the most obstinate Heretick; the most self-conceited Schismatick; and in a Word, all Men whatsoever, are the Objects of our Love: Their *Persons* we are in Duty bound to love, but their *Sins*, and their *Errors* we must for ever abhor and avoid.

The Substance of all that I have delivered upon this Argument, is comprized in these few Words of St. Paul^e, *In Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves^f: And let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice^g: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for CHRIST'S Sake hath forgiven you.*

The Duty of mutual Love being thus explained, we are now to proceed to the second Thing propounded, which was to enforce the Observance of this Duty. But this will afford Matter for another Dis-

^e John iv. 9. ^f Phil. ii. 3. ^g Eph. iv. 31, 32.

course,

course, and shall therefore be reserved to another Opportunity.

SERMON xii.

† John iv. 7.

Beloved, let us love one another.

HAVING, I hope, in my foregoing Discourse from this Place, explained the Duty of mutual Love; by showing that it is made up of these Parts, *viz.*

First, Of esteeming and treating each other according to the Dignity of our Natures.

Secondly, Of doing and wishing one another no Evil.

Thirdly, Of wishing and doing one another all the Good we can.

Fourthly, Of forgiving each other all Injuries that may have passed between us.

Having, I say, gone through *This*, which was the first Thing I then propounded; I proceed now to my

Second and last Head; namely, To enforce the Observance of this Duty.

And this I shall endeavour from the following Considerations.

First,

First, From the Excellency of the Duty considered in General.

Secondly, From the kind Influence it has in particular upon the Profit and Advantage of Society.

Thirdly, From its Tendency to promote the Pleasure and Happiness of Life.

Fourthly, From the Command of CHRIST. And,

Fifthly, From his Example.

First, This Duty of Christian Love, may be recommended and enforced from the Excellency of it, considered in general: For the Practice hereof will truly exalt and adorn the Soul, and make us vastly superiour in worth to those who neglect it. It supposes us to be free from the Government of such Qualities, as are attended with Shame and Dishonour; and that we are endued with those which bring Grace and Glory. It argues us able to conquer the Motions of Malice and Revenge; of Pride and Envy: It shows that we are cloathed with Humility and Meekness; and are of a generous, merciful, and forgiving Temper.

And what a desirable Thing is it to enjoy that Calm and Serenity in ones Mind, which is necessarily introduced by such a lovely Disposition? What an Honour

nour must it reflect upon us, to subdue those boisterous Passions, which are apt to drive us headlong to such Actions and Designs, as prove a Mischief and Vexation, both to ourselves and others? This is a Victory that carries *Healing in its Wings*: Here the Conqueror and the Conquered are both one: No one is injured by the Conquest; but the wider it spreads, and the farther it is pursued, of the greater Advantage it will be to all. Such a Victory as this, whosoever obtains, must needs be *more excellent than his Neighbour*; for *he that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City.*

Again, how amiable is an affable and condescending Carriage, towards those *below us*; a modest and civil Behaviour towards our *equals*; and a Deportment duly respectful towards our *Superiors*? Of how great *Price in the Sight* both of God, and Man, is *the Ornament of a meek and quiet, and inoffensive Spirit*, that is careful to avoid Quarrels; that is glad to heal Differences; and disdains to wish or do any Mischief to others? In short, what can be a more convincing Argument of true Magnanimity, or Greatness of Soul, than a hearty Inclination to advance the
Felicity

Felicity of all Mankind; a Readiness to forgive Injuries; to return Blessings for Curses, and Good for Evil?

Thus does the Exercise of Christian Love in its several Branches, communicate a real Beauty to the Practitioners of it, and exceedingly raise the Dignity of human Nature.

Indeed by *This* we in some sort become *Partakers of the Divine Nature* too; and resemble God in his most *glorious*, as well as most *endearing* Perfection. To this Purpose, the Apostle speaks in the Words immediately following my Text; *Beloved, let us love one another; for Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love.* And again, at the 16th Verse of the same Chapter; *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Well therefore might *St. Paul* value this Grace of *Love* above the extraordinary Gifts of Healing; of working Miracles; of Prophecy; of divers Kinds of Tongues, and the like: As you may see he does, in the 12th Chap. of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

Yea, well might he prefer it to those

excellent Graces of *Faith*, and *Hope*, as he does in the 13th Chapter of the same Epistle, Ver. 13. And now abideth *Faith*, *Hope*, *Love*, these three, but the greatest of these is *Love*.

As *Love* is that *excellent Way* wherein we must walk, in order to arrive at Heaven; so 'twill be our constant Employment there; where there will be no Room or Occasion for other Gifts and Graces, *when Prophecies shall fail; when Tongues shall cease; and such imperfect Knowledge as we have at present, shall vanish away; when Faith shall be swallowed up in seeing the Things believed; and hope, in possessing the Things expected; then shall this Flame shine forth in perfect Brightness; neither shall there be any ill-natured Reports, or malicious Behaviour, or any Things else, to disturb the Harmony of Society; or hinder us from exerting the noble Acts of Love, over all the boundless Ocean of Eternity.*

Secondly, As this Duty of Christian Love may be recommended and enforced from the Excellency of it considered in general; so may it likewise from the kind Influence it has in *particular* upon the *Profit and Advantage* of Society.

We are *naturally* framed and disposed
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for Society; and the Nakedness of our Condition does *necessarily* require it. No Man is self-sufficient; or able to pass through this World, with any tolerable share of Delight and Satisfaction, without the Help and Assistance of others? And as in the Body *natural*, the Head cannot say to the Feet, *I have no need of you*, nor the Feet to the Head, *we have no need of you*: So neither in the Body *politic* or *civil*, can the Rich and Powerful say to their Inferiors, *you are of no use to us*; or these to the other, *our Well-being does not at all depend upon you*. The Former can't be supported in the Splendour of Life, without the Labour and Industry of the Latter: And the Latter cannot comfortably maintain themselves, and Families, without being employed, or dealt withal, or protected by the Former. And so likewise among Persons whose Circumstances are pretty much alike, whose Fortunes are near upon a Level, mutual Correspondence, and exchange of kind Offices are necessary for the Promotion of each other's Good and Advantage.

Now as our frail and weak Condition, doth absolutely require the Use of Society, in order to enjoy the Comforts, and Conveniences, and Necessaries of Life, so the

Benefit arising therefrom, will be less or greater, according to the Affection that reigns in the Members of it. Where *Ill-will* prevails, we must expect to meet with Shyness in Conversation; Coldness in the Return of Courtesies; and even a Denial of common Civilities. Yea, where *such* a Temper prevails, we must look to be cheated in our Dealings; to have our good Names barbarously traduced, to find our Prosperity grudged at; and to discover Contrivances to lessen, or undermine it: So that though we are obliged to be beholden to Society, upon Account of some Advantages; yet the Damages and Inconveniences proceeding from it, will be very great also. But where the Spirit of Christian Love has the Ascendent, there is no repining at our Happiness; there are no Designs cherished against our Welfare; there's an Unwillingness to do us the least Injury, or Unkindness. Where the Duty of Christian Love is practised, there's exact Honesty in the Business of Trade and Merchandize; there's a Readiness to warn us of any Danger that threatens; and a Gladness to acquaint us with any Thing that may be for our Advantage.

In a Word, if we practise this Duty of Christian Love as we ought, we shall have

have an Aversion from doing each other any kind of Mischief, and a Desire to do each other Good, in every Respect that we are able: Now where the Members of Society are averse from doing any Mischief, and desirous of doing all the Good they can to one another; the Profit redounding to them *from* Society, must needs be very great, and far beyond that which those enjoy, who neglect the Performance of this Duty.

Thirdly, Another Consideration from whence this Duty may be recommended and enforced, is its Tendency to promote the *Pleasure* and *Happiness* of Life. This indeed follows from what was delivered upon the last Particular. For Pleasure and Happiness, will naturally increase upon the Increase of Profit and Advantage: The more beneficial our Intercourse with others prove to be, the more shall we be pleased with it; and the greater Delight shall we enjoy in cherishing and continuing: Since therefore the Exercise of Christian Love towards each other, will certainly advance our Profit and Advantage; it must needs have a Tendency to promote our Pleasure and Happiness.

Was this Duty universally practised, what a blessed Alteration would it produce

nuce in the World: How great Comfort and Satisfaction should we then receive in all our Communications with Mankind? Instead of Over-reaching and Deceit, we should always meet with Justice and Fidelity. Instead of Rudeness and Affronts, we should every where be entertained with Civility and good Usage. And instead of the Complaints of Stinginess, and *grinding the Face of the Poor*, wherewith we are now frequently troubled, we should then be constantly delighted with the Praises of Generosity, Kindness, and Mercy. Every one would then be ready to heighten and secure the Felicity of his Neighbour. We should quietly enjoy the Blessings of Providence, and Industry; and have no Cause to be under Apprehensions of Mischief, or Disturbance from others: Or to speak in the Style of the Eastern Elegance; *our Houses will be safe from Fear; we might sit every Man under his Vine, and under his Figtree; and there would be none to make us afraid: We might take the Timbrel, and the Harp, and rejoice at the Sound of the Organ; we might spend our Days in innocent Mirth, and our Years in harmless Pleasure.*

And as the Practice of Christian Love, does thus tend to promote our Happiness,
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in advancing our Profit and Advantage ; in moulding the Tempers of Men, into friendly Dispositions towards us ; in establishing us in the quiet and secure Enjoyment of what we call our *Own* : So does it likewise, in making us Partakers of those Blessings, which more properly belong to *others*. Did the Spirit of Christian Love reside in us, we should be pleased with the Prosperity of our *Neighbours*, and every Addition to *their* Welfare, would be an Increase of *our* Satisfaction. 'Tis one of the Properties of Love to wish well to others, to desire that they may thrive and flourish ; and therefore when we find they *do* so, we cannot but be delighted, because therein our Desire is accomplished, and *the Desire accomplished is sweet to the Soul*.

To finish this Consideration : The Duty I am now recommending, is agreeable to our Natures in their highest Exaltation : And to *us* it ought also to be endeared, upon account of our Fellowship in Society, and Religion. So that as *Abraham* said to his Nephew *Lot*, *Let there be no Strife between me and thee, for we are Brethren* ; the like may I say here ; let there be Love exercised between *us*, for we are Brethren. We are Brethren in a *Natural* ; Brethren
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in a *Civil*; and Brethren in a *Spiritual* Relation: We are Brethren as we are descended from the same common Parents; Brethren as we are Members of the same Civil Society: And Brethren as are Professors of the same Faith and Hope. Oh! *how good and pleasant a Thing must it be, for such Brethren to dwell together in Love and Unity. It is like the precious Ointment upon the Head, that ran down unto the Beard, even unto Aaron's Beard, and went down to the Skirts of his Cloathing. Like as the Dew of Hermon, which fell upon the Hill of Sion: For there the Lord promised his Blessing; and Life for evermore.*

Fourthly, Let us consider the *Command* of CHRIST with respect to this Matter. Can we think upon *his* wondrous Humility and Condescension? Can we remember the Hardships of his Life, and the Torments of his Death? Can we reflect upon his Agony and bloody Sweat? Can we imagine him stretched out upon the Cross, feeling the acutest Pains, pouring forth his precious Blood, and offering his unspotted Soul a Sacrifice for our Sins, and is it possible to have the least *Spark* of Thankfulness, and not be *enflamed* with the sincerest Affection for him? Ought
not

not this Love of CHRIST to constrain us to Love him? And can we be said to Love him, if we disobey his Commands? Doth not he expect that our Love should be demonstrated by our Obedience? saying, if ye Love me keep my Commandments: And is not this one of his Commandments, yea, a principal one, that we Love one another ^a? *A new Commandment, saith he, give I unto you, that ye Love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.*

With such tender Indearments, with such pathetick Earnestness hath our Lord and Master laid *this* Command upon his Disciples and Followers. *This* Command his Apostles have oftentimes urged in their Epistles, as I had Occasion to shew in my former Discourse upon this Subject, and might give many *more* Instances of, was it any ways needful. Why then call we him Lord, Lord, and do not the Things which he saith? To bow the Knee before him, and cry, hail King; to own him for our Master in Words, whilst our Actions declare, that *we will not have to reign over us*, is a most impious and provoking Piece

^a John xiv. 15.

^a John xi. 34. 35.

of Mockery; 'tis worse than that of the Roman Soldiers who led him to his Crucifixion; and *'twill be more tolerable for them in the Day of Judgment, than for such disobedient, such scandalous Christians.*

Fifthly and Lastly, The Example of CHRIST is another strong Enforcement of this Duty. He did not, like the Jewish Expounders of the Law, lade Men with Burdens grievous to be born, and refuse to touch the Burdens with one of his Fingers; but the Duties which he commanded are easy, and pleasant; and illustrated by the Brightness of his own Example. His *Practice* was a most perfect Pattern of his *Doctrine* in every Virtue which he taught, and more especially in *This* of universal Charity. The Miracles which he wrought, were as evident Proofs of his boundless Mercy, as they were of his Almighty Power: 'Twas *his Meat and Drink*, and his constant Employment to show Works of loving Kindness to the Children of Men: He sought for Opportunities of being beneficial to the World; *he went about doing Good.* And at length he *drank the bitter Cup* of God's Wrath in our Stead; even *then* praying for the Forgiveness of his, if possible, *more bitter Enemies*; and dying for the

the Redemption even of them that kill'd him.

Should not then *this Mind be in us, which was also in CHRIST JESUS?* Did he exercise such Love towards Mankind leaving us an *Example* that we might follow his Steps, and shall we not imitate this blessed Pattern, which 'tis impossible to equal? *I have given you an Example*; saith he, *that ye should do as I have done to you*: And 'twill be to no Purpose, that we are called Christians, if we don't endeavour to become *like* unto CHRIST: 'Twill signifie nothing to be entered into his Church, if we disregard, or make light of his Authority: For they who will not submit to the Authority of CHRIST'S *Commands*, nor be prevailed upon, to imitate the *Example* of his Life, shall never be saved by the Merits of his Death.

And thus I have done with the Considerations I proposed to lay before you, in order to enforce the Observance of the Duty of mutual Love. God grant that they may have so happy an Influence upon us, as to make us *fruitful* in the Love of each other, *and therein to abound more and more.*

^c John x. li. 15.

X

S E R

SERMON *xiii.*

Romans viii. 28.

And we know that all Things work together for Good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his Purpose.

WE cannot have a plainer Argument of God's tender Care and Concern for his Children when visited with Afflictions, than in that he hath afforded Means of Comfort under them, and Assistance to bear them; by letting them know, that they shall *all work together for their Good.*

Afflictions and Sufferings must be expected in this State of Probation and Trial; and the dearer we be to God, the bitterer Taste we may sometimes have of them. If we are firmly resolved to adhere to the Doctrine of Christ, or, as St. Paul phrases it, *will live Godly in Christ Jesus*: If we will freely speak and act according to our Conscience, and are fully

2 Tim. iii. 12.

bent

bent upon keeping in the Way to Happiness, without turning aside to the right Hand or to the left, we shall frequently meet with Persecution of one Sort or other: Tho' it may not seize upon our *Persons*, it will strike at our Estates; or if it cannot reach *Them*, 'twill stain our *Reputations*. We must look to encounter with *the Contradictions of Sinners*, to be reviled and defamed, and to have our most innocent Words and Actions misconstrued and misrepresented.

These Things if considered alone, may render our Lives uneasy and troublesome; and to *run* our Christian Race as we ought, we shall have *need of Patience*. But if we duly reflect upon the Consideration proposed in my Text, we may certainly obtain that Patience which we shall need.

For how can we repine at any worldly Calamities, or with what Face can we be discontented and impatient under such Evils, if we are perswaded that they'll *all work together for our Good*? And here St. Paul (who very well knew the Truth of what he spoke) hath assured us, That *all Things work together for Good, to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his Purpose.*

Which Words being delivered in the Nature of an universal Affirmative, concerning those *who love God, and are called according to his Purpose*, my import, that all Conditions of Life, whether flourishing or calamitous, whether prosperous or afflicted, shall to such Persons prove *Beneficial* and *Advantageous*: So that let them be blessed with Health, or visited with Sicknes; let them be possessed of Riches, or pinched with Poverty; let them be sinking under the Storms of Adversity, or swimming in the delightful Streams of God's Bounty; their *Good* and *Welfare* shall through every such Circumstance be carried on and promoted.

But tho' I doubt not of the Truth of the Words in this Latitude, yet I shall now only consider them as relating to the *Afflictions* and *Sufferings*, which may happen to good Men in this World; *this* being I conceive, *most* agreeable to the Mind of the Apostle in this Place. And accordingly in discoursing from them, my Business shall be to do these two Things:

First, To enquire how, and in what Sense, Afflictions and Sufferings may be said to work for Good.

Secondly, To examine the Discription of those Persons, to whom Afflictions
and

and Sufferings will work together for Good.

First, I am to inquire how, and upon what Accounts Afflictions and Sufferings may be said to work for Good. Afflictions and Sufferings being in their own Nature evil, do not seem to promise any such good Effect: Neither are we to expect it from them considered only in themselves, but as they are assisted by the Use of our Reason, and the Blessing of Almighty God. For Afflictions and Sufferings are only *Instruments* of our Good; but Instruments cannot work themselves without other Things to help, or use them. And accordingly 'tis remarkable, that the Apostle here, makes use of a compound Word, *Οὐδ' αὖτε ὅτι πάντα συνέργει ἡ ἀγία* *For we know that all Things work together for Good*, intimating that together with a right Use of our Reason, and the Blessing of Almighty God, Afflictions and Sufferings will tend to promote our Good. And that I conceive chiefly, in these three Respects.

First, Because we may learn from *them* to regulate our Judgments and Affections concerning the good Things of this Life.

Secondly, Because they are Instrumental in stirring us up, to a more careful and circum-

circumspect walking in the Paths of Holiness.

Thirdly, Because they capacitate us for the Enjoyment of a greater Degree of future Happiness and Glory.

And *First*, Afflictions and Sufferings may be said to work for Good, because we may learn from them to regulate our Judgments and Affections concerning the good Things of this Life. When we are in Danger of being mistaken in our Judgments, and of placing our Affections upon any Objects in an *undue* Measure; when we esteem Things *above* their true Worth, and love them *more* than we ought to do; whatsoever is of Use to correct our Errors, and set us right, is so far really profitable to us; and so far as any thing is really profitable to us, so far it may be truly said to *work for our Good*.

Now such is our Case, with respect to the good Things of this Life; and such is the Lesson we may learn from Sufferings and Afflictions concerning them. For what through the Corruption of our Nature; and what through a long and intimate Acquaintance with these Things; we are too apt to value them at a *higher* Rate, and contract a *greater* Kindness for them than they deserve. True indeed it is,

is, that we ought to have a proportionable Value and Kindness for these Things, in order to express our Gratitude, and excite us to Thankfulness, to God the Giver of them. But if we will purchase or preserve them at the Expence of a good Conscience, if we will commit a Sin rather than go without them, or so eagerly pursue them, as to neglect and hazard the good Things of the next Life, which are infinitely better; then certainly, our Affections are *immoderately* fixed upon 'em, and are an evident Token, that we have made a wrong Judgement concerning 'em.

And of these blameable Proceedings, God knows, we are very prone to be guilty: For which Reason, we are the more beholden to those Things that will tend to prevent our Judgments and Affections from making such false Steps; or teach us to regulate, and bring them into right Order, after they have gone astray. And for the compassing of these desirable Ends, Afflictions and Sufferings may certainly be of excellent Use and Service.

For Afflictions and Sufferings are *sensible* Arguments, that the good Things of this Life are of a perishing Nature: That they are subject to be taken from us, and

we to be render'd incapable of enjoying *them*, by a vast Variety of Accidents. And from hence, if we exercise our Reason in a proper Way, we must conclude, That they are very unfit Things to confide *in*, to depend *upon*, or to expect our Happiness *from*: And if this Reasoning is permitted to have *it's perfect Work*, 'twill sink and cool our Esteem and Love of them to a due Proportion: And when such a Regulation is accomplished, we shall, by the Grace of Almighty God, look after Happiness elsewhere; we shall *lay up for ourselves Treasures* in another Place, even *in Heaven*; where neither *Moth nor Rust doth corrupt*, and where *Thieves do not break through, nor steal*; where no *inward Decays*, nor *outward Violence*, shall ever deprive *us* of the Objects of immense Delight, or hinder us from relishing, and delighting in *those* Objects.

Since then our Judgments and Affections are too apt to be guilty of Mistakes, about the Value of *temporal Blessings*; since such Mistakes are like to be attended with bad Consequences; since the Effect of a well-regulated Esteem and Love of these Things will be good and beneficial; hence it appears, that Afflictions and Sufferings, which by showing us the decay-

ing,

ing, inconstant, and unsatisfying Nature of these Things, teach and admonish us to regard them accordingly, are so far *useful* and *profitable* to us; and may therefore, upon that Account, be said to *work for our Good*.

Secondly, Afflictions and Sufferings may be said to *work for Good*, because they are instrumental in stirring us up to a more careful and circumspect walking in the Paths of Holiness. As infinite Holiness is essential to the Godhead, and shines with an unspotted Brightness in the Divine Being; so the greater Degrees of Holiness we attain unto, the more do we *partake of the Divine Nature*, and consequently the better we are: Whatsoever therefore hath a Tendency to make us more *holy, as God is holy*, is *therein highly beneficial*; and doth greatly work for our *Good and Welfare*. But Afflictions and Sufferings have a Tendency to produce *such* an Effect; and to produce *such* an Effect, is a Reason why God's Children are visited with them.

Thus the Apostle insinuates in Heb. xii. 9, 10, 11. *Furthermore we have had Fathers of our Flesh which corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; shall we not much rather be in Subjection to the Father*

of Spirits, and live? For they verily for a few Days chastened us after their own Pleasure; but he for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness. Now no Chastisement, for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.

God is not of a cruel Temper, to afflict willingly, and grieve the Children of Men without sufficient Reason; the Chastisements he lays upon them, are intended for their Advantage; for the Amendment of their Lives, and Improvement of their Graces: And if Men are fully persuaded of this, what can be more natural for 'em than to comply with God's gracious Designs; to walk with greater Care and Circumspection in the Paths of Holiness; when evil Days are upon them, that to their Calamities may be removed, and they may again see Days that are good?

This was the Behaviour the Psalmist learnt from his Afflictions, as he tells us himself, cxixth Psalm at the 67th Verse: *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy Word.* And again, at the 71st Verse of the same Psalm; *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that*
I might

I might learn thy Statutes. Not that he was before ignorant of the Statutes of God; or that he did not walk by them in the *general* Course of his Life; but he had not so *perfectly* learnt them, and did not walk by them so *carefully* as to guard himself from falling into grievous Sins: And therefore when he was visited with Sufferings and Afflictions, he looked upon them as Punishments for his past Offences; he considered them as Messengers sent to reprove him for his Faults, and to warn him against Negligence and Inadvertency, by which he might be guilty of the like again. And accordingly he thereupon set himself to repent truly of his former Miscarriages; to reform the Government of his Life, and was more watchful and circumspect in observing the Laws of God for the future.

And if the *same* Considerations of Afflictions prevails with *us*, they'll be Instrumental in stirring *us* up to the *same* Behaviour; we shall more plentifully *bring forth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness*, in hopes of being delivered from our Troubles: We shall with a watchfuller Diligence beware of *sinning any more*, for fear of having *worse Things come upon us*. From these Reflections, it appears highly
reason-

reasonable to acknowledge with the Psalmist in another Place^d; *Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in thy Law.*

Farthermore; 'tis to Sufferings and Afflictions that we are indebted for the Exercise and Improvement of several Christian Graces and Virtues; Such as Patience, Trust in God's Providence, Submission to his Will, and the like.

What Assurance can we have, that our Souls are in every thing resigned to God's Pleasure, 'till we have been tried by Dispensations, which are seemingly harsh and severe? How can we know that our Trust is in God's Providence for Blessings, is firm and unfeigned, except we have exercised in it an appearing Want of his Favours? Or after what Manner can our Patience be proved, when there are no Troubles or Calamities for us to undergo? These are Virtues which must be exercised by Sufferings and Afflictions; and 'tis the Exercise of these Virtues, which advances and improves them.

Agreeably to which St. Paul tells us, in Rom. v. 3. 4. 5. that *Tribulation worketh Patience; and Patience Experience; and Experience Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is*

^d Psalm xciv. 12.

shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. Tribulation worketh Patience; it exerciseth and improveth Patience, and other Graces that are nearly allied to it: And the Exercise of these Graces shows by Experience that we have them: And Experience of these Things raises in us Hope, or Expectation of future Happiness: And this Hope, or Expectation, maketh not ashamed, shall not be disappointed, nor suffer us to be ashamed of Sufferings and Afflictions: Because the Love of God, the Evidence of God's Love to us, or of our Love to God, or of both, is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Thus then it appearing, that Afflictions and Sufferings are Instrumental in leading us to the Attainment of higher Degrees of Holiness: It appearing likewise, that the higher Degrees of Holiness we attain unto, the better we are: Hence we may justly reckon *that* another Reason, why Afflictions and Sufferings may be said to *work for Good.*

Thirdly and lastly, Afflictions and Sufferings may be said to *work for Good*, because they capacitate us for the Enjoyment of a greater Degree of future Happiness and Glory. This is a Consequence

quence of what was said on the second Particular: For the Degrees of Glory and Happiness in Heaven will be distributed, according to the Degrees of Holiness we arrive at upon Earth: Afflictions and Sufferings therefore, being Instrumental in bringing us to higher Degrees of Holiness in *this* Life, do thereby capacitate us for the Enjoyment of a greater Degree of *future* Glory and Happiness. And this is farther confirmed by St. Paul, in 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, καὶ ὑπερβαλὺν ἐς ὑπερβαλὺν an Exceeding upon Exceeding, an inexpressible Exceeding, and eternal Weight of Glory.*

Here then we see *another* Reason, why Afflictions and Sufferings may be said *to work for Good*; they work for Good, in that they are Instrumental in advancing our Good in *another* World. God is pleased to send us Afflictions for the Correction of our Misbehaviour; for the Trial of our Patience, and Submission to his Will; and if we bear them as we ought, and use them aright, he will bestow upon us a greater Degree of Happiness hereafter: He has made the *Cross* the Way to a brighter *Crown*, and suffering a Path to a *larger* Portion of Bliss.

Well

Well therefore might the Apostle speak as he does at the 18th Verse of the Chapter before us: *I reckon that the Sufferings of the present Time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us.* Our Sufferings are but of this *present Time*; they cannot last long, Death will put an End to them: But the Glory which shall be revealed in us, is of the Nature of Christ's Glory; we shall as St Paul expresses it, *be glorified together with him*; and *this* our Glory will be eternal: 'Twill admit of no Decay or Consumption; of no Period or Conclusion. O vast Eternity! How are our Thoughts lost in the Contemplation of it! How does it ravish our Souls at once with Wonder and Delight! *This, this* it is, that gives the greatest Excellency to the Glory which shall be revealed, and chiefly sets it beyond Compare with any Thing here below; namely, that it is Eternal. God grant therefore, that *we may not look at the Things which are seen*, any farther than is consistent with our pursuing and obtaining *the Things which are not seen*; for *the Things which are seen are Temporal, but the Things which are not seen are Eternal.* Amen.

SERMON XIV.

Romans viii. 28.

And we know that all Things work together for Good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his Purpose.

IN my former Discourse from these Words, I proposed to do these two Things:

First, To enquire how, and in what Sense, Afflictions and Sufferings might be said to work for Good.

Secondly, To examine the Description of those Persons, to whom Afflictions and Sufferings will work together for Good.

What I thought proper to speak upon the First of these Heads, I have already delivered; by showing, that together with a right Use of our Reason, and the Blessing of Almighty God, Afflictions and Sufferings might be said to work for Good in these three Respects.

First, Because we may learn from them

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to regulate our Judgments and Affections concerning the good Things of this Life.

Secondly, Because they are Instrumental in stirring us up, to a more careful and circumspect walking in the Paths of Holiness.

Thirdly, Because they capacitate us for the Enjoyment of a greater Degree of future Glory and Happiness

These Things being considered, I go now to the

Second Thing propounded; namely, to examine the Description of those Persons, to whom Afflictions and Sufferings will work to gether for Good.

They are such as love God, such as are called according to his Purpose. Thus the Apostle describes them in the Text: *We know (says he) that all Things work together for Good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his Purpose.*

By *them that are called according to his Purpose*, may be meant, those Persons who are called into Covenant with God, by the Ministry of the Gospel; those who have had the Gospel of Christ revealed to them, and do embrace and profess the same; that is in short, all Christians. For as God designed to be reconciled to sinful

Men, by the Blood of his Son Jesus Christ, so 'twas his *Purpose*, that this his good Pleasure should be revealed to them; that they should be acquainted with the Conditions of Reconciliation; and be invited to enter into Covenant with him, by accepting of those Conditions. Now 'tis the Gospel or Religion of Christ, which contains those Conditions of Reconciliation: They therefore who have this Gospel or Religion of Christ made known unto them, and receive the same by becoming Christians, are thereby entred into Covenant with God, and may properly be said to be *called according to his Purpose*.

And in *this* Sense, we find the like Phrase used in *other* Places of Scripture. Thus in the 1st Chap of this Epistle to the *Romans*, at the 6th Ver. St. Paul terms *all* the Christians that were in *Rome*, the *Called in Christ Jesus*. Thus again, in 1 *Cor.* i. 9. Those who had embraced Christianity at *Corinth*; and in every *other Place*; are said to be *called by God unto the Fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*: That is, by God's revealing the Gospel to them, and their receiving it; they were called and brought into the Society of Christ's mystical Body, the Church, and to partake of the Benefits of his

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natural Body's being slain upon the Cross. So likewise in *1 Tim. i. 9.* he lets us know, that God hath saved us, and called us with an Holy Calling, not according to our Works; but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began. And in *Eph. i. 9.* He calls God's revealing the Gospel to the World, a making known unto us the Mystery of his Will, according to his good Pleasure, which he had purposed in himself.

From these Passages it appears, that 'twas God's Purpose to reveal the Christian Religion to the World; by embracing of which, Men might enter into Covenant with him: It appears also, that those who had this Religion revealed to them, and embraced the same, are in Scripture termed *the Called in Christ Jesus*; are said to be called of God into the Fellowship of his Son; and to be called with an Holy Calling: And agreeably hereunto Christians are, in ^d other Places of Scripture, said to be *Partakers of the Heavenly Calling*; and exhorted to make their Calling sure; and the like.

Hence then we have good Grounds to conclude, that by them who are called

^d Heb. iii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 10. Eph. iv. 1.

according to God's Purpose, may be meant, those Persons who are called into Covenant with God, by the Revelation of the Christian Religion; that is, those who are become Christians. When therefore the Apostle declares, that *all Things shall work together for Good to them that are called according to God's Purpose*; we may reasonably presume his Meaning to be *this*, to wit, that all Things shall work together for Good to Christians.

But here it must be considered, that too many who are called Christians, do not *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are called*: And that this Calling may be effectual to their Salvation, and make all Things work together for their Good; 'tis necessary that they act suitably thereunto, by a careful Observation of its Rules and Directions. And this is implied in the other Part of their Description, namely, that *they love God*: A brief Discussion of which, will give us the compleat Character of those, to whom all Things will work together for Good.

Now the Love of God consists in such a just Esteem of him, as sets him infinitely beyond all other Beings; and is attended with choosing him for our Supreme Good; desiring the Enjoyment of him; and

and yielding a sincere and universal Obedience to him. For the Love of any thing, commonly signifies a *due* Esteem for it; which Esteem, shows itself in different Manners, answering the Difference of the Objects to which it hath Relation.

Thus the Love of our King is such an Esteem for *him*, as appears in Expressions, and Designs of Honour and Loyalty towards him. Thus again, the Love of our Parents is such an Esteem for *them*, as is accompanied with Tender-heartedness and Obedience to them. And thus God being infinitely more excellent than all Things else, the Love of God must be such an Esteem for *him*, as prefers and prizes him infinitely beyond all other Things; which, if it is suffered to sink into our Souls, and take deep Root in them, will make us choose him for our chief Good, and desire the Enjoyment of him.

This we find exemplified in the Psalmist who was possessed with the most ardent Love and Esteem of God, and made him the chief Object of his Choice and Desire. *Whom (says he) have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire in Comparison of thee, Psalm lxxiii. 24.* Thus in the Beginning of the 63d Psalm, he expresseth his passionate

ionate Longing for him in these Words: O God, my God, early do I seek thee, my Soul thirsteth for thee. So again, in Psal. xlii. 1. *As the Hart desireth the Water Brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee, O God.* As that Creature, after it hath been hotly chas'd by Hunters, may be supposed vehemently to long for a Brook of Water, to assuage it's Heat, and slake it's raging Thirst; so did his devout Soul breath after the Enjoyment of God, whom he sincerely loved; and long to drink of those Rivers of Pleasures which eternally flow from that inexhaustible Fountain of Delight.

Thus if we truly love God, we shall esteem and value him infinitely beyond all other Beings; and this will be attended with choosing him for our Supreme Good, and desiring the Enjoyment him. We are all naturally determined to choose and desire what we judge to be a Good; and if we esteem God as infinitely the greatest Good, 'tis but natural for our Choice and Desire to rise and increase accordingly.

But to prevent any Mistakes in this Matter, let it be farther remembered, that whatever great Notions Men may have in their Minds of God's immeasurable Excellencies and Perfections; whatever

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Earnestness they may feel in their Desires to worship him, and whatever Warmth they may express in their Acts of Devotion; they must beware of flattering themselves from thence, that they are true Lovers of God, unless they likewise pay an hearty Obedience to all his Laws: For without *this*, 'tis impossible a sincere Love and Esteem for God should be dwelling in them.

God is our Supreme Governour and Law-giver, and if we will not yield that Obedience to his Laws which he requires, we provoke and affront him; but Provocations and Affronts are utterly inconsistent with a fervent Love and Esteem. Those whom we dearly love and esteem, we endeavour to *please*; and if we love and esteem God as we ought, we shall do our utmost to *please him* in the Way which we know *will* please him; that is in a sincere Conformity to all his Commandments.

To this Purpose are the Words of our Saviour in St. *John's* Gospel, Chap. xiv. Ver. 15. *If ye love me keep my Commandments*: And again at the 23d Verse; *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words*. And so St. *John* tells us, in his first Epist. v. 3. *This is the Love of God, that we keep his*
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Commandments: And his Commandments are not grievous: In this the Love of God must show itself, even in keeping his Commandments; and as this Love increases, the Difficulty of keeping them will wear off and diminish.

This then is the best Standard, by which to know that we love God. *This* is the truest Sign that we duly value and esteem him, when we reverence and obey his Precepts. *This* is the surest Argument that we have *chosen* him for our Supreme Good, when we choose the Means required on *our* Part to *obtain* him. In a Word, *This* is the most evident Token, that we desire the Enjoyment of him in Heaven for ever, when we carefully walk in those Paths which will lead us to such an Enjoyment.

And so much may suffice to have been spoken to the second Thing propounded; which was to examine the Description of those Persons, to whom Afflictions and Sufferings will work together for Good.

The Sum of what has been delivered upon this Head, is this: To wit, that by *them who love God, and are called according to his Purpose*, we are to understand those who are called to be Christians; and have their Hearts so affectionately dispos-

ed towards God, as to value him above all other Beings; to choose him for the Supreme Good; to desire the Enjoyment of him; and to yield an unlimited Obedience to him. *These* are the Persons who love God, and are called according to his Purpose: *These* are they to whom Afflictions and Sufferings will work together for Good.

And the Reason why Afflictions and Sufferings will work together for Good to *such* Persons, is plain and obvious enough. For *such* Persons will look upon them as Chastisements of a loving Father; they'll consider them as Messengers sent to exercise and improve their Virtues; and so set themselves upon answering the Ends for which they are sent, whereupon the Grace of Almighty God concurs to make 'em serviceable in the Promotion of their Welfare and Advantage.

Whereas, when Afflictions and Sufferings fall heavy upon thole who are *destitute* of the Love of God, and regard not the End of his Dispensations, there's no such good Fruit to be expected *from* them. When Affliction meets with a stubborn Spirit, then (says a pious^c Author) Tribulation excites Impatience; Impatience

^c Mr. Burkit, in his Com. on Rom. v.

causeth Perplexity; Perplexity Despair;
and Despair Confusion.

Give me Leave now, to make a Reflection or two from what hath been delivered, by way of Application, and then I shall conclude.

First then, Since Afflictions and Sufferings are intended to work together for our Good; from hence we may observe, what great Reason there is for Patience and Contentment *under* them; and even for *Thanksgiving* to that good God who lays them *upon* us.

We generally think ourselves much obliged to him who cures our *bodily* Infirmities, tho' he puts us to Pain and Trouble in order thereto: Certainly then if we judge aright, we must reckon ourselves far *more* indebted to him, who aims at the Promotion of our *Spiritual* Welfare, tho' the Remedies he makes use of, are sharp and distasteful. And where can we find a stronger Argument for Patience and Contentment under the Calamities we meet with, than to consider, that the Severity of God's Dispensations is tempered with such merciful Designs, as the Advancement of our greatest Good and Advantage?

When therefore he visits us with Afflictions

afflictions of any Kind; instead of murmuring and repining at his Disposals, let us take care to bear them with Christian Acquiescence and Chearfulness; together with a grateful Sense of the Benefits he intends thereby. For such a Deportment as this, we have great Reason; inasmuch as *God's Rod and God's Staff* go together; and whilst *one* of his Hands is taken up with his *Rod* in *smiting* us, the *other* Hand is held forth with his *Staff* to *strengthen* and *support* us.

Secondly and *lastly*, Since 'tis to such Christians who love God, that Afflictions and Sufferings will work together for Good; from hence we may take notice, how highly it concerns us to be of *that* Number, if we mean to enjoy this glorious Privilege.

Such Christians as love God, will work together with Afflictions, and diligently endeavour to make a right Use of them: Such Christians may justly expect God's Assistance to crown their Endeavours with Success upon Earth; and such only can have well-grounded Hopes of a greater Reward in Heaven.

Let it therefore be our principal Business to get our Souls possessed with a true Love of God. With close Attention

consider we the infinite Excellencies and Perfections of his Nature. With Hearts full of Gratitude contemplate we, *the exceeding Riches of his Mercy and loving Kindness to usward*, expressed in creating, preserving, and Redeeming us. With the greatest Seriousness reflect we upon the *Authority* of his Laws, and our *many and great Obligations* to Obedience: That so by *all these* Considerations we may be excited, to cherish the highest Esteem and Value for him; to Choose and Desire him before all Things else; and Reverence and Obey him, without Exception of Reserve.

This will be to *love him with all our Mind, with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength*. And if we love him in *this* Manner, we shall be sure to answer the Designs of his Fatherly Chastisements, by endeavouring to grow wiser and better through the Afflictions we suffer; and then we need not fear having his Blessing, to make them work for our present, and future Good and Happiness.

To conclude; if we are sincere Lovers of God, we may keep our Spirits from sinking under any Calamities, by considering the Benefits that will redound to

us from them: These will be *Waters of Comfort*, to chear and refresh our Souls, whensoever we are deprived of Pleasure of the *feeding in green Pastures*.

SERMON xv.

Psalm xxxi. 11.

I was a Reproach among all mine Enemies, but especially among mine Neighbours, and a Fear to mine Acquaintance, they that did see me without, fled from me.

THERE is hardly any thing can entertain us with a more delightful View of the Changes which wait upon human Affairs, than the surprising Turns and unexpected Alterations, that we find in the Life of Holy *David*. From the humble, yet happy Employment, of tending his Father's Sheep, and looking after *the Ewes great with Young*, God exalted him to be the chiefest Instrument in destroying the Giant of *Gath*, and in van-

quelling the Armies of the uncircumcised Philistines. Hereupon he was followed with the loud Applauses and Acclamations of the People; his Favour and Friendship were courted by the Noble; and to crown his Glory, his Sovereign gave him one of his Daughters to Wife.

But behold the strange Lubricity of his Fortune; no sooner had he arrived to this honourable Station, but he fell into Disgrace: No sooner had he made himself the Object of his Fellow-subjects Love, but the King made him the Object of his Hatred.

When David returned from the Slaughter of Goliath, the Women came out of the Cities of Israel, singing and dancing: to meet King Saul, with Tabrets, with Joy, and with Instruments of Musick: And the Women answered one another as they play'd, saying, Saul hath slain his Thousands, and David his ten Thousands; and Saul was wroth, and the Saying displeas'd him, and he hated David from that Day forward.

After this, he sent him upon dangerous Enterprises, in order to take away his Life; and when he found that his Point could not be gained by under-hand Practices, he openly declared himself to be his

his Enemy, so that he was constrained to flee from his Presence, to hide himself in *Dens and Caves of the Earth*, lest he should fall into Saul's Hands, who hunted and pursued him *like a Partridge upon the Mountains*, thirsting after his Blood, and longing for his Ruin.

So quickly did the Fall of *David* succeed his Advancement; so suddenly was he thrown from one of the highest States of Happiness, to one of the lowest Degrees of Misery. Nevertheless, the same Providence which *took him from the Sheepfold* hover'd over him still; *was his Shield, Buckler, and Defence*, in all the Dangers that surrounded him; and at length placed him upon the Throne of his Enemy, and made him King over *Israel* in his stead.

And now the *Scene* was again changed, and Men *acted* after another Manner: Those who were his Enemies, on a sudden became his Friends, or at least pretended to be so. Others were proud of owning their former Acquaintance, and the generality of all Sorts endeavour'd to get into his good Graces.

Before, when he was pursued and persecuted by *Saul*, he was made *the Scorn of Men, and the Outcast of the People*:
Now,

Few, very few dared to stick to him in his Distress; his Acquaintance were afraid of being thought such, lest they should thereupon incur the King's Displeasure, and those his Enemies which had envied his Happiness, did then disdainfully insult over his Misery.

Thus we find him complaining of his forlorn Condition, in the Words of my Text, which is part of a Psalm supposed to have been written at that Time. *I was, saith he, a Reproach among all mine Enemies, but especially among mine Neighbours, and a Fear to mine Acquaintance, they that did see me without fled from me.*

In discoursing from which Words, I shall first of all, raise some proper Observations from them, touching the ill Treatment which Men meet with, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances.

Secondly, I shall point at some of the Causes of this ill Treatment, And,

Thirdly, I shall offer some Considerations to dissuade others from treating them so.

First then, I am to raise some proper Observations from the Text, touching the ill Treatment Men meet with, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances. Now the Observations which I shall make, are these two.

First,

First, That Men, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances, are generally neglected and forsaken by their former Acquaintance. This Observation is suggested to us from the latter Part of the Text, *I was a Fear to mine Acquaintance, they that did see me without, fled from me.*

Secondly, That Men, when reduced to mean Circumstances, are generally villified and ridiculed by their Enemies. This Observation is built upon the former Part of the Text, *I was a Reproach among all mine Enemies, but especially among my Neighbours.*

I begin with the first of these, namely, that Men when reduced to mean Circumstances, are generally neglected and forsaken by their former Acquaintance; and the Proof of this Observation is confirmed by common Experience. 'Tis no new Thing to find Men that profess great Kindness and Esteem for others in their Prosperity, and who yet most shamefully disregard and desert them in their Adversity: No extraordinary Matter for Men to proffer *any* Service to their Acquaintance when they *don't* want it, and to deny them the least Assistance when they *do*. As long as any one abounds in
Wealth

Wealth or Honour, we see that he is admitted to the Familiarity of the Rich and Noble; but if *those make themselves Wings and fly away* from him, we find that *these* do as quickly disappear and follow after them; *like a Shadow* they suddenly *depart*, and continue not.

To a Shadow indeed they may be fitly compared; for as *that* attends the Body of which 'tis a Shadow, no longer than the Light shines on't; so *they* abide with their Friends no longer than their Circumstances make them have a splendid Appearance. To carry on the Similitude a little farther: As Shadow is nothing at all, but the Absence or Want of the *direct* Rays of Light, caused by the Interposition of some *Body*, and hath no *real, positive* Existence, so the Friendship which most Men profess, is merely feigned and imaginary, without any Thing *real* in it; if 'twas otherwise, they would be true to those to whom they profess it, in all Fortunes and Extremes whatsoever.

Here then is one Advantage, which a Man that is brought from a flourishing Condition to the contrary, enjoys above others; to wit, that he hath an Opportunity of knowing who *are* his real Friends, and who *not*. If those with whom he was
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intimate with before, lend him their helping Hand, and generously make use of their Power and Ability, to comfort and succour him; he may be then certain, that they are honest and true-hearted; but if they stand as it were a-loof from him, take no other Notice of his mean Condition, than to forsake him upon that Account, he may safely conclude, that they are false and deceitful.

And alas! how far doth the Number of this latter Sort exceed that of the Former. How *many* when tried by the Touchstone of Adversity, prove *false* to their Promises, to *one* that proves *true*? How often do we see Men, whose Interests have been exceedingly advanced by the Aid of others, break through all the Ties of Humanity, Shame, and Gratitude; so as to forget and disown their Friends, when they are oppressed by any grievous Calamity? How often do we see Men, who have maintained a very close Correspondence with others, whilst they plentifully enjoyed the good Things of this Life; presently upon a Reverse of their Condition, contract a most strange and amazing Shyness; and look *down* upon them, with such an haughty and contemptuous Air, as if they never knew them? Nay, as if their

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Misfortunes had transformed them into a *lower* Species of Creatures than *themselves*? As if they had debased the Dignity of human Nature, and made them to be *less Men* than they were before?

In fine, How common is it, in this base, treacherous, degenerate Age, for Men not only to neglect and forsake their unfortunate Acquaintance, but even to strive to sink them *lower* than they are already; and to apply themselves with more Art and Diligence to further the Completion of their Ruin, than those who were counted their greatest Enemies.

These are Things which happen very frequently in our Days; and so they did in the Days of our Fore-fathers, and in the old Time before them. The blessed Saviour of the World, who was God as well as Man, and who took upon him the Nature of Man on purpose to endure Afflictions; was, when the greatest of them drew nigh, abandoned by the most intimate Companions of his Life; one of his Disciples betrayed him, another denied him, and those who had before *forsook all, and followed him*, at his Apprehension, *forsook him, and fled*. David who was a Type of him, did in his Adversity meet with much the same Treat-

ment, as hath been shown above And *Job*, who is supposed to have lived several hundred Years before him, did not fare a jot better. In the 29th Chapter of *Job*, we have a large Account of the Deference that was paid him in his Prosperity, by the Aged, by the Noble, by the Princes, and by every body that knew him: And in the last Chapter of the same Book, after 'tis signified that God raised him out of the Afflictions which he had brought upon him, and gave him twice as much as he had before; it immediately follows most emphatically; that *THEN* there came unto him all his Brethren, and all his Sisters, and all they that had been of his Acquaintance before; and did eat Bread with him in his House; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him, over all the Evil that the Lord had brought upon him, every Man also gave him a Piece of Money, and every one an Earring of Gold. But how did they treat him when he was stript of his Glory? When the Crown was taken from his Head? When the Hand of the Lord laid heavy upon him, and covered him with Misery and Shame? He tells us himself in the 19th Chapter; My Kinsfolks, saith he, have failed, all my inward Friends ab-

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horred me; I am forgotten by my familiar Friends, and mine Acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

Thus it appears, how common, how general, how ancient the Practice is, of neglecting and forsaking Acquaintance, when they are reduced from a flourishing Condition to the contrary. And certainly it can be no small Grievance to those who are so served; if they were their *open Enemies who did them this Dishonour*, they might more easily bear it; if their *Adversaries magnified themselves against them*, disregarded their Troubles, or slighted them for their Sake; it would be no more than they might reasonably expect; but to be neglected, despised, and disowned by *their former Acquaintance, Companions, and familiar Friends*, must needs be a considerable Aggravation of their Misery, a vast Addition to their other Calamity. And so much may serve for our first Observation; which was, that Men, when reduced to mean Circumstances, are generally neglected and forsaken by their former Acquaintance.

The second Observation is, that Men, when reduced to mean Circumstances, are generally villified and ridiculed by their Enemies. *I was*, saith David in

my Text, *a Reproach among all mine Enemies*; and in another Place, he says, *they jested upon me, they that sit in the Gate speak against me, and the Drunkards made Songs upon me*, Juvenal also in his third Satyr, takes Notice of this Practice as a very great Hardship: There is nothing, says he, more grievous in Poverty, than that it exposeth Men to the Scorn and Ridicule of others.

Riches do for the most Part secure Men from the open Affronts of their Enemies, who are usually backward enough in giving foul Usage to those, by whom they think they shall be paid in their own Coin; but when Men have lost their Wealth, their Courage is commonly supposed to be lost with it; from hence their Enemies conclude, that they may abuse them without any Danger of meeting with Reprisals; and this Conclusion emboldens them so to do, by using their Endeavours upon all Occasions, to make their Persons vile and ridiculous.

Accordingly we find, that *when Men are minished and brought low, through Oppression, through any Affliction or Trouble*, they are presently bereft of their Reputation, loaded with Infamy, and made the veriest Villians in the World.

Their Misfortunes are imputed to the Judgment of God upon them, for some *great* tho' *secret* Wickedness of their Lives; their Piety passes for Hypocrisy; if they have been Liberal, they are branded with Prodigality; and all other Virtues which they *were*, or *are* eminent for, go by the Names of their opposite Vices. Though *they did not walk in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor stand in the Way of Sinners*; they are nevertheless punished with the Jeers of the *Scornful*, whose barbarous Diversion it is, *to laugh at their Calamities, and mock at the Afflictions which are come upon them.*

Thus having discoursed upon the Observations arising from the Text, touching the ill Treatment which Men meet with, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances: I shall now go on in the *Second Place*, To point at some of the Causes of this ill Treatment.

Now this ill Treatment is partly owing to Interest in same, and to Malice in others; and in most, to a proud and haughty Disposition of Nature.

And *First*, The ill Treatment we have been taking Notice of, is partly owing to Interest. *This is the Compass by which most Men steer their Actions*; and what-
 soever

forever seemeth likely to lessen it, is as carefully shunned and avoided by them, as the Rocks and Quickfands are by the Mariners. Such selfish, narrow-soul'd Wretches can't endure the Thoughts of parting with any of their Wealth; and therefore to prevent any Occasion of doing so, they neglect and forsake their Acquaintance whenever the World frowns on them. Should they continue to be familiar with them as before, the Persons distressed might possibly *expect* their Assistance, if not *implore* it; but to grant *this* to Men whose *present* Circumstances can't enable them to make a Requital, they think would be no other than robbing themselves of some of their Riches; and upon *this* Reflection, they become quite Strangers to them; reasonably supposing that Men will have no Heart to ask Relief, where they see no Hopes of gaining it, and where they find themselves already tacitly denied it.

Thus do self-interested Persons desert their unfortunate Acquaintance, for fear of losing a little of that Money which they doat upon; thus do they sacrifice *their Friends* to that *Golden Calf* which *they themselves* fall down to, and worship.

Secondly, Another Cause of the ill Treat-

ment we have been taking Notice of, is Malice. Men, in mean Circumstances are villified and ridiculed by their Enemies, for this very Reason, because they are their Enemies. The Devil hath got such Possession of some People, that they cannot be at Rest, 'till they have done an Injury to those with whom they have quarreled; and if it cannot be done to their Minds whilst the hated Persons are a Match for them, they will owe them a Pique 'till they have 'em at a Disadvantage; namely, 'till their outward Condition is altered much for the worse, at which Time they can with more Safety make them the Subjects of their Slander and Derision.

Thirdly, Another Cause, and the last I shall mention, of the ill Treatment which Men meet with, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances, is Pride. Pride puffs Men up with vain and lofty Conceits of themselves, and inclineth them to reckon it beneath their Dignity, to exercise good Nature, or good Manners, to those who are cast below 'em. It makes them overlook the Things which are *truly* commendable in others, and value them only for a gay Outside. It makes them disregard and contemn a wise Man,
only

only because he is poor, and show Respect to a foolish Man, only because he is rich. A proud Man thinks that his *Enemies* when reduced to mean Circumstances, are fearful and low-spirited, and therefore he villifies and ridicules them: He counts it a Disgrace and Disparagement to have *Acquaintance* that are brought to the same Condition, and therefore he neglects and forsakes them.

I come now to the last Thing propounded, namely, to offer some Considerations to dissuade Men from the Behaviour we have been discoursing of. Now the Considerations which I shall offer for this Purpose, are these that follow.

First, That thus to do is very base and inglorious.

Secondly, That thus to do is very barbarous and inhuman.

And *Lastly*, That thus to do is very weak and imprudent.

And as I go along, I shall show under each of these Heads, that the being true to our Friends and Acquaintance, and civil and courteous to our Enemies, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances, is the direct contrary of all this.

And *First*, Such a Behaviour as I have been describing, is very base and inglorious.

ous. This Behaviour we have seen springs from some of the most base and sordid Principles imaginable. It argues us to be stingy, and selfish; proud and malicious: And what more scandalous and unreputable Characters can be fixed upon Men than these? What is more base than Treachery? And what is more treacherous, than to be false to a familiar Acquaintance in his Affliction? What is more inglorious than Cowardice? And what is more cowardly, than to trample and insult over a weak and defenseless Enemy? How vile are those reputed, by thinking Men, who act after this Manner? How are they hated and hiss'd at, whilst they are upon the Stage of Life? How dishonourably do they make their *Exeunt* in their Death? And how ungrateful is the Remembrance of them to Posterity *after* it?

On the other Hand, those Persons who have stuck close to their Friends and Acquaintance in the *Adverse* as well as in their *Prosperous* States; who have done what they could to *better* their Condition; who have took no Advantage from their Enemies Misfortunes to reproach and abuse them; but have rather been ready to help and relieve them: Such Men,

Men, I say, have been always esteemed great and illustrious; their Praises have been from Time to Time, celebrated in the Writings both of Poets and Historians; they are ever lov'd and honour'd in the Age wherein they live; and the Memory of 'em is blessed among all succeeding Generations.

But *Secondly*, To neglect and forsake our Acquaintance, and to villifie and ridicule our Enemies, when they are reduc'd to mean Circumstances, is very barbarous and inhuman. To those that are afflicted Compassion should be shown; as indeed the very Frame of our Nature doth teach us; for it is so deeply implanted in us by God Almighty, that the Holy Pen-men commonly place it in our most inward sensible Parts, the Bowels. Thus when we don't show it to the Objects of it, we are said to *shut up our Bowels of Compassion*; 1 *John* iii. 17. and in *Col.* iii. 12. we are bid to *put on Bowels of Mercy*; and *Philip* ii. 1. we read of *Bowels and Mercies*; and in other Places, we find that Pity is expressed by *the sounding of the Bowels*, and the like. And hence perhaps it is, that in the Greek Tongue, the same Word *σπλαγγνα*, which signifies Bowels, doth signifie Pity or Compassion
also;

also; for as much as Pity or Compassion is thought to affect the Bowels, by causing a *secret Motion* in those nice and tender Parts of our Constitution.

Whosoever therefore is so cruel and hard hearted, as not to sympathize in some Measure with those who are in distress; as not to be *touched with a feeling* of their Calamities, doth voluntarily put off Humanity; and in some Sense, range himself in the Number of the most hateful sort of Brutes.

And if *they* are justly reckoned inhuman and barbarous, who barely don't commiserate others in Distress; *those* certainly must be much *more* so, who *oppress* the Afflicted, and *double* their Calamities by their ill Treatment; as they most plainly do, who neglect and forsake their Acquaintance, and vilify and ridicule their Enemies, when they are reduced to such Circumstances.

Whereas those Persons who behave themselves *contrary* to all this, with Respect to their Acquaintance and Enemies, do instead of degenerating from the Dignity of their Kind, raise and exalt it; by likening themselves to the blessed Author of their Beings; who *doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men;*
and

and is *never* the *less*, but rather the *more* ready to give them his Heavenly Blessings; because they are destitute of Earthly Comforts.

Thirdly and *Lastly*, To neglect and forsake our Acquaintance, and to villifie and ridicule our Enemies, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances, is very weak and imprudent. In the 13th Chap. of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, at the 3d Ver. we are bid to remember them that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer Adversity, as being ourselves also in the Body, and therefore subject to the like Adversity.

And certainly 'tis very imprudent not to follow this Advice, for as it is observed, that all Things under the Moon partake of her Vicissitudes or Changes; so it is not more true in reference to any Thing, than to the Concerns of Mankind. The good Things which we enjoy, are very transitory and unsteady; therefore *Solomon* tells us, that *Riches make themselves Wings, and fly away as an Eagle*: Our Saviour says, that *the Treasures which Men lay up here, are exposed to the Moth, Rust, and Thieves*; and *St. Paul* calls them *uncertain Riches*: And such our own Experience finds them to be. A
rough

rough Wind, or a tempestuous Sea, doth often sink the Merchant and his Ship. An ill Season, or an hungry Soil, frequently eats out the Substance of the laborious Husbandman. And those who receive no Damage from the Water, or the Earth, are sometimes ruin'd by a devouring Fire. And though they should happen to escape all these Accidents, they may yet be impoverished by the Frauds and Violences of Men. So that it doth not seldom come to pass, that great Persons stand in need of Help from the Mean; and that Providence quite alters the Face of Things, by *putting down the Rich and Mighty from their Seat, and proportionably exalting the Poor and Contemptible.*

It must, therefore be very great Imprudence to treat those that are in Adversity after such a Manner, as may leave in them any Impressions of Unkindness; since at sometime or other, *we* may be in *their* Condition, and *they* in *ours*: whereby they will have an Opportunity of returning us our bad Usage: And when they have this Opportunity, there is no doubt, but they will take the Advantage of it, nothing embittering Mens Spirits, and provoking them more, than to be trod upon when they are *down*; and to meet

meet with *ill* Treatment, where had Reason to expect *good*.

On the contrary, to be true to our Friends and Acquaintance, and to be courteous and civil to our Enemies, when they are reduced to mean Circumstances; is the Way to gain a greater Share in the Love of the *Former*; and to *make the Latter be at Peace with us*. Such a Behaviour as *this* is strangely charming, and insensibly steals away Men's Hearts from them. And if ever Misfortune comes upon those who show it, those *to* whom it is showed, unless they have the Devil's Ingratitude, will do their utmost to repair the Breaches it hath made, by cheerfully lending them their Aid and Assistance.

If then we have any Regard to our Credit and Reptutation; if we have any Respect to the Dignity of our Nature; if we would truly consult our Profit and Advantage; let us not give such an ill Treatment as hath been described to our unfortunate Acquaintance and Enemies. For we see, that *Thus* to do, is to render ourselves vile and inglorious. *Thus* to do, is to divest ourselves of Humanity, and to assume the Savageness of Beasts. And lastly, *Thus* to do, is to draw upon *ourselves* the same Treatment, and to deprive

ourselves of Help and Succour, when we are cast into the like Condition.

Wherefore, *if our Enemies are naked, let us, if we can, cloath them; if they are hungry, let us feed them; if they are thirst, let us give them Drink.* If the good Things of this Life have taken their Leaves of our Friends or Acquaintance, let us continue faithful to them notwithstanding: Neither let our Friendship and Kindness be overcome by the Evils which have befallen them; but let us endeavour to overcome those Evils by our good Offices to them. For by so doing we shall make ourselves truly great and glorious. By so doing, we shall act agreeable to the Dictates of Human Nature, and after the Example of the Divine. Lastly, by so doing, we shall provide for the Days of our own Adversity; and lay up in Store for ourselves a good Foundation, against the Time, which we know not how soon may come. That therefore we may all do so, God of his Infinite Mercy grant, for Jesus Christ his Sake. Amen.

SERMON xvi.

Eccles. ii. 1.

Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, for thou shalt find it after many Days.

SO L O M O N, who exceeded all the Kings of the Earth for Riches and Wisdom, and was directed by the One into the surest Methods of advancing the Other; is supposed in the ^a proverbial Speech before us, to stir us up to a generous Sharing of our Substance with the Poor and distressed, who cannot make a Requital, from the great *Advantages* redounding from the Exercise of such Liberality.

Some might be apt to reply upon a *naked* Proposal of this Duty: What! shall we *bestow our Goods to feed the Poor?* Shall we give our Riches to the Needy,

^a Parabolica locutione hortatur ad Eleemosynam. Parrò illud (*super transeuntes aquas*) Hebraicè & Græcè sonat (*super faciem aquarum*) id est, liberaliter & profusè, perindè atq; si opes tuas in aquas profunderes. ESTIUS in locum.

from whom we can *hope for nothing again*. This is the Way to change Condition with 'em, to deprive ourselves of our own Lively-Hood, and no better in Effect than *cast our Bread upon the Waters*; for what we thus dispose of will certainly be lost, as our Bread if thrown into the Ocean.

The royal Preacher therefore, who had Philosophy to see very far into the natural Tendencies of Things, and Inspiration from above to establish the Truth of his Remarks; in order to obviate and remove any such Difficulties that might be made against contributing our Assistance to those who want it, lets us know for our Encouragement, that if we *do thus Cast our Bread upon the Waters, we shall find it after many Day*: That is, we shall find a sufficient Return for so doing, which tho' many Days may pass before it arrives, will more than countervail its Delay by the Interest 'twill bring with it. Or, by *finding it after many Days* may be signified, that such a Reward constantly goes along with the Performance of

* Ne autem quis existimaret elemosynam sic liberaliter effusam perire, sicut perit quod in aquam dejicitur, ideo addit sapiens: *quia post tempora multa illum invenies*, q. d. nihil inde tibi peribit, sed quicquid contuleris in pauperes, tandem etiam post longissimum tempus, cum scenore ad te redibit. *Idem ibidem.*

this

this Duty, as we shall find ourselves in the Enjoyment of, after we have many Days enjoy'd it. When the *Gusto* of other Pleasures that have been purchased by our Wealth, is weaken'd, or quite departed, the Consciousness of having acquitted ourselves as we ought in distributing to the Necessity of our Brethren, will be a Spring of *fresh* Satisfaction, which will always accompany us, even to the end of our Life, and never cease to attend us when our Life here is ended. *Both* these Senses may be design'd in the Expression of *finding it after many Days*, and therefore I shall have an Eye to *both* in my farther Discourſing from it.

The Words of the Text taken altogether may have an^d Allusion to sowing

Some understand the Words as a *direct* Encouragement, to sowing watry Ground; some, to following Merchandize by Sea; as others, to a generous Exercise of Beneficence to the Poor. To this Purpose speaks FLACIUS ILLYRICUS, *Mitte panem tuum super faciem aquarum, quia in multitudine dierum invenies illum*; pro, post multos dies; id est, post longum tempus revertente Nave habebis lucrum. Alij de seminatione in solo humido, quia in aestibus tales agri sunt fertiles. ET RUGOSUM, *Panem mittere super faciem aquarum*, aliqui de largienda pauperibus eleemosyna, aliqui de maritima negotiatione exponunt, quod tales Negotiatores victum oportetq; suas mari credant, veluti seminantes eas spe metendi lucri. *Clavis Scriptura* Par. 1 Col. 236, 237, & 819. *ejusdem partis*. They are true in all these Senses; and therefore applicable to any of 'em, as Occasion is presented.

Corn upon watry Land, which when the Season *hits* may produce a Crop plentiful beyond Expectation. Or perhaps the Royal Preacher being himself a Royal Merchant Adventurer too, and having a *Navy of Ships which once in three Years* brought him in a prodigious Quantity of Gold, and Silver, and other Commodities, might have some Regard to the vast Returns that are often made by a long Voyage at Sea, when it proves successful. But be this as it will, they will be profitable for our Instruction, if from them we take Occasion,

First, To learn how to perform the Duty of giving Assistance to those who are in Want.

And, *Secondly*, To consider the Encouragement annexed to the due Performance of this Duty.

In order to the *First* of these we must observe, that *every one* who is in Want of our Assistance is the proper Object of it; and therefore to every such Person our Assistance is to be granted. To this Purpose are the Words immediately following my Text, *Give a Portion to seven, and also to eight*: Where we are not to think that our Kindness is restrain'd to the pre-

cise

cise Number of ^d eight, but a definite Number is put for an *indefinite*; and it signifies, that we must divide our Portion with every one, whose Necessities entitle him to a Share of it. For *every one* who partakes of human Nature is our *Brother*; and *whose both this World's Good, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God, or of his Brother in him?* And this is the rather to be taken Notice of, because there are People in the World of so shrivell'd a Disposition, as to have no suitable Respect to the Calamities of Others, unless they pass under the Denomination of the same Party *themselves* are attach'd to. Nay there have been such Monsters of Cruelty under the Shape of Men, and Profession of Christians, as, instead of alleviating, or removing the Miseries of their Fellow-Creature, have done their utmost to heap *more* Miseries upon them; and with an unsparing Hand, despoil'd 'em of the Comforts of Life itself, and even of Life itself, only because they could not

^d His verbis sapiens iterum hortatur ad eleemosynam large & copiose faciendam; estq; sensus, Da septem hominibus egentibus, imo octo, id est, multis, & valde multis, partem & portionem cuiq; suam, id est, conare omnibus benefacere. ESTIUS in locum.

swallow down the most impious Doctrines, and palpable Contradictions. And where others are happily hinder'd by *wholsome Laws*, from running into the *same Excess* of Barbarity, depriving innocent People of the Means of getting their daily Bread, has been recommended by some as a laudable Exercise of *wholsome Severities* upon 'em, for not having their Thoughts, as our Thoughts.

But *what manner of Spirit* so ever such Persons are of, they are undoubtedly destitute of the *Spirit of the Gospel*, which inculcates nothing so much as universal Love and Kindness to the whole Race of Mankind. And if any one can behold his own Nature distressed in the Person of another without relieving him according to his Ability, he is so far from having a Right to the glorious Name of a *Christian*, that he does not deserve to be call'd a *Man*.

Indeed when several Objects of Pity are presented to us, having their Cases alike circumstantiated in other respects, we *may* and *ought* to give the Preference to *those who are of the Household of Faith*, to those who are more nearly related to us, to those whom we have Reason to think are most deserving. But then at the same time, we must refuse Assistance to *none* in what we

are

are able, but as far as lies in our Power we must do Good unto *all*. We should be like the Sun which casts its comfortable Beams upon all the Inhabitants of the Earth; or rather as the Maker of the Sun, *causeth it to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sendeth Rain upon the Just and the Unjust*; so we should endeavour to *be perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect, by being merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. The Mercy of God is all over his Works*; and if we are obedient to the Voice of Charity, we shall not deny our Mercy to so much as *One*.

As we are thus bound to yield Assistance to *every one* who stands in need of it, so *every one* is under an Obligation to yield this Assistance; tho' not in the same Degree, which is to be measur'd by the Necessity of the Receiver, and the Ability of the Giver, yet with the same hearty Love and Affection.

Some in the *lower* Conditions of Life seem to think, that it belongs only to these of plentiful Incomes, to be at any Expence for the Benefit of the Distressed. But this without Doubt is a very great Mistake. For as *they who have Abundance must give Alms accordingly*; so *they who have but little, must not be afraid to give*
accor-

according to that little. To which Purpose we find a poor Widow casting her two Mites into the Offerings of God; which, being all the Living that she had, was indeed more than she could afford; and more than all the Wealthy cast in of their Abundance, tho' many of 'em cast in much. And agreeably hereto, St. Paul intimates, in Eph. cap. iv. 28. That he who laboureth worketh with his Hands, ought to give to him that needeth. And if there be a willing Mind, 'twill be accepted according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not. If we have not more to give than two Mites, which make one Farthing, That will be accepted. If we cannot spare so small a Matter as That, we must give our Counsel, our Advice, our Prayers, and the like: None of which will be overlook'd by the All-seeing Eye of God, who is pleased with a bountiful Heart, tho' under the strangest Circumstances, and has all these Things noted in his Book.

If those in the lower Ranks are thus oblig'd to assist the Needy, they who are in higher Stations are much more so. If a small Share is expected from the Poor themselves, a far larger will be looked for from the Rich and Wealthy. These have

have a greater Trust repos'd in 'em, which nearly concerns them to discharge with Honour: For they are set as Stewards over the numerous Family of the World; and *it is required of Stewards, that Man be found faithful.* But where is the faithfulness of that Servant who suffers his own Avarice and Luxury to devour what his Lord has appointed to be laid out in suitable Provisions for every one of his Retinue? *Such* a one is he, who being by the Providence of God surrounded with Blessings, that he may dispense to his indigent Brethren a proper *Portion of Meat in due Season*, does yet afford 'em such a scandalous Allowance as if he reckon'd 'em no better than *the Dogs which eat the Crumbs that fell from their Master's Table.*

In short, let our Fortunes be what they will, we are all bound to be helpful to those that are in Want, in proportion to our respective Abilities; and notwithstanding in this Case we are left to judge for ourselves, we must hereafter *give an Account* of it, and therefore it mightily behoves us to deal ingenuously in our Distributions, *that we may do it with Joy, and not with Grief.*

Moreover, we must perform this Duty

with a chearful Mind, and all possible Sweetness of Behaviour; with Pleasantsness of Countenance, and Mildness of Language. For *God loveth a chearful Giver*; and the Gift will be the more highly esteem'd by the Receiver upon Account of the agreeable Manner wherein 'tis convey'd. Whereas if we *throw a Kindness at another's Head*, or show any Tokens of Grudging, or Pride in conferring it; we thereby destroy the Grace and Beauty of it, and may displease almost as much in *one* Respect, as we shall oblige in *another*.

We must also take Care that our Assistance be speedy and seasonable. Thus *Salomon* directs us *Prov. iii. 27, 28. Withhold not Good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the Power of thine Hand to do it: Say not unto thy Neighbour, go and come again, and To-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.* To put off our poor Brethren from Time to Time, to grieve the Spirits of the sad in making them *impatiently* wait for Succour, when we can afford 'em present Relief, is to increase and lengthen their Troubles; and looks as if we took Delight in the Sorrows of the Afflicted. Contrarywise, we should rather endeavour to prevent their Addresses, by *coming upon* 'em with kind Offices

needs *before they are aware*; we should reach out our helping Hand as soon as we find a proper Object, we should be ready to do Good whensoever we meet with an Opportunity.

And now I have mention'd this, 'tis natural to reflect upon the happy Opportunity, which *at this Time* presents itself before you. Here you have an Opportunity of doing Good to a great many at once. Of doing good to several poor Children with respect both to their Spiritual and Temporal Welfare; in teaching them their Duty, in cloathing their Bodies, and qualifying 'em for some honest Employment, wherein they may get a handsome Subsistence. Of doing Good to their Parents, who will hereby find their Burdens considerably lighter, and who cannot but be extremely pleas'd to see their Offspring in a fair Way to live comfortably in the World. Of doing Good to the Society they *more immediately* belong to, in furnishing it with a larger Supply of useful Members. Of doing Good to their Country, in increasing the Number of those who may be serviceable to it in a great Variety of Capacities. And in short, of doing Good to Mankind in General, in helping to make the World

better, and consequently *happier* than it is. Upon all which Accounts the *present* Opportunity bespeaks your *particular* Regard, and *generous* Contribution, to set forward the Well-being of *These* who are already provided for *in Part*, and likewise to *advance the Number* of 'em.

Lastly, In giving Assistance to *These* and all *other* Objects of it, it highly concerns us to be acted by the *noble* Principle of sincere Love to God, and our Neighbour. *This* will animate each of us to a proper Communication of our Kindness to every Branch of Human Nature. *This* will make us bestow it with Chearfulness of Mind, accompanied with a pleasant and friendly Deportment. And *This* will effectually promote us to lay hold of every Opportunity of yielding speedy and seasonable Relief to those who want it.

By following the Rules which are here laid down, we shall perform the Duty I have been discoursing of in a *right Manner*. And that we have very great Reason for *so doing*, will appear from the

Second, Point to be considered, namely, *The Encouragement annexed to the due Performance of this Duty*.

Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, for thou shalt find it after many Days. Not-with

withstanding those upon whom our Favour has been bestowed are under an Inability of requiting it, we shall assuredly find our Account in it, sooner or later, both here and hereafter. For as the Rain cometh down, and the Snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the Earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give Bread to the Eater, and Seed to the Sower; so He that minisreth Seed to the Sower, will al'o minister Bread for our Food, and multiply our Seed sown, and increase the Fruits of our Righteousness, which in due Season we shall reap if we faint not.

One Fruit arising from the due Performance of this Duty, will be an Increase of our temporal Interest. Like the poor Widow's Barrel of Meal, and Cruise of Oyl, which was all she had, even all her Living, and yet, in a firm Reliance upon Divine Providence, most generously us'd in sustaining the Prophet *Elijah*, our Stock will not fail of a continual Supply, but our Plenty will hold Proportion to our Charity. How strange soever *This* may seem to those poor spirited Wretches, whose Kindness is cramp'd up within the narrow Compass of their own dear selves, the bountiful Person will Experience the

Truth of it, from the Reason of the Thing, and the Blessing of Almighty God.

For if our Beneficence is prudently apply'd, as it ought, 'twill correct Laziness, and encourage Industry; 'twill lessen the Number of idle Vagrants, and multiply Hands to work in some honest Business; and the more Hands are at Work in preparing the Accommodations of Life, the cheaper will those Accommodations be; consequently *less* Money will be required for the Procurement of 'em; and consequently *more* will be saved for the Augmentation of our Store. Thus the Wealth of the Community in general, will be considerably advanced; and from hence every Member will derive its proper Portion, as every Part of the natural Body receives Warmth and Nourishment from the Blood, which regularly circulates through the Whole.

Again, when Contributions have been employ'd, for instilling Principles of Probity into the Children of the Poor, they will not be so much expos'd to, nor so easily ensnared by, Temptations to Pilfering and Couzenage, so common among those who have been bred to Nothing, and whose Minds are altogether unweeded of their vicious Dispositions. They will learn to despise

de'pise the mean Arts of Falshood and Dishonesty; and be ambitious of rendring themselves fit to be trusted with the Affairs and Commodity of the Society they belong to: Hence the Credit of that Society must mightily increase, which on Course will cause the Trade and Commerce of it to flourish; and where *These* are in a prosperous Condition, an Affluence of Riches cannot be wanting.

And as for you who are *Inhabitants of this Place*, and find no small Accession of Wealth from the Numbers that are brought hither for Health and Diversiō; you should consider, that it will not a little encourage them to *repeat* their Visits, to see your Poor well taken Care of, and *strong to labour*; *that there is no Decay* unregarded, no profligate Vagabonds, *and no complaining in your Streets*. And when they shall observe your Hearts as well open to *convey Advantages to others*, as to *receive* them *your selves*, several of those who come here for the Benefit of your *Medicinal Waters*, will be induced to join with you in *casting their Bread upon these Waters too*; your well-conducted Charity will be spoken of throughout the Nation, and be a Means of drawing a greater Confluence of profitable Guests from every Corner of the Land.

But besides this *natural* Efficacy, there is in bounteous Actions to promote our secular Profit; we may justly expect it from the *Promises of God* so often made to the Performance of 'em. For *thus it is written* in the Records of *Eternal Truth*: "There is that scattereth, and
 " yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to Poverty. The liberal Soul shall
 " be made fat; and he that watereth, shall
 " be watered also himself. He that hath
 " Pity on the Poor, lendeth to the Lord;
 " and that which he giveth, will He pay
 " him again. I have been young, and now
 " am old, yet saw I never the Righteous
 " forsaken, nor his Seed begging their
 " Bread: The Righteous is ever merciful, and lendeth, and his Seed is blessed." From which Passages, and *more* to the same Purpose, we may well conclude, That exercising Liberality to the Poor is the right Way of *laying up for ourselves Treasures upon Earth*; and transmitting them, with the firmest Policy of *Ensurance*, to our Posterity after us.

Secondly, The Practice of this Duty will bring us in a Return of the *greatest Honour*. By Honour here I do not mean the Praise of Men; which is a *vanishing* thing. We shall find our Account from the Performance of this Duty, in the

Principle to proceed on: But that *intrinsic* Worth whereby we are *really* enobled, and recommended to the Esteem of *God himself*, who is the Fountain of Honour. *This* is not to be deriv'd from the highest Attainments in Knowledge, which if unaccompanied with Good-nature, will liken us so much the more to the infernal Spirits. It does not belong to what is commonly called Noble Blood, which has run attainted quite down from *its Original*; and been made baser yet by *actual Transgression*. We cannot lay Claim to it for having Abundance of Riches, which a Man may possess, and be still the most *despicable* of Mortals. But if we are *rich in Good Works*; if we rejoice to *shed abroad the Influences* of our Love to Mankind, and Delight to succour *those who are in Need and Necessity*; we shall *thereby* arrive at *true Nobility*: We shall resemble *the God of Glory* in that which he makes the Glory of his Being; we shall be all *Glorious within*, which is far more honourable than to have our *Cloathing of wrought Gold*. And this is a Recompence of our bountiful Behaviour for which we shall not wait at all; it goes along with it, and is its inseparable Companion.

Thirdly, We shall find our Account from the Performance of this Duty, in the

sublime Pleasure wherewith it is attended. And *This* likewise is a Return for which we shall not tarry *many Days*: Acts of Beneficence *immediately* communicating a noble Delight to those who exercise 'em; and that Delight being *repeated* as often as we reflect on them. Unless our Souls are sunk into the vilest Stupidity, we must needs be *sensibly touch'd* with the Distresses we see others undergo; and this *Fellow-feeling*, being itself an Uneasiness, will strongly incline us to endeavour the Removal of those Distresses which are the *Cause* of it; and therefore when thro' our Means they are in any measure remov'd, a proportionable Ease must of Course return to our Minds, together with a large Share of the Satisfaction we perceive our Fellow-Creatures enjoying upon a Change of their Condition.

Moreover, we having the Honour to be *made after the Image and Likeness of God*, who is Goodness itself, and from whom, as from an everflowing Fountain, every Blessing we partake of is *Originally* derived; to be ready to Distribute, and willing to Communicate, must be highly agreeable to the Frame of our Constitution, and consequently prove a continual Fund of exalted Pleasure. For what is Pleasure but the Gratification of
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our natural Desires? And what can gratify the Desires of a rational Being more, than to do Good? and if Light and Beauty are *pleasant to the Eye*, because proportion'd to the Faculty of Seeing: If harmonious Sounds are entertaining to the Ear, because adapted to the Faculty of Hearing: If the *rest* of our *external* Senses are in like manner diverted with Objects suitable to their respective Organs: It will follow by a Parity of Reason, that Perceptions far *more* delectable must spring up in our *Souls* from the Manifestation of our *Goodwill to ards Men*, which are so agreeable to their *Superior* Nature, so conformable to their *Divine* Dignity. And if so great a Pleasure will arise *within* from doing good to *any* Part of Mankind, how much *greater* shall we feel in being helpful to those Branches of it whose Necessities *cry aloud* for Assistance? And if to *deliver the Poor that crieth, and the Fatherless, and him that hath none to help him; if to be Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame*; if, by a seasonable Aid, to revive the dejected Spirits of a decaying Family, and *cause the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy*; if it will *vastly* transport us, by these, and such like Means, to make the miserable happy, render the Lives of our

our needy Brethren comfortable upon *Earth*; what Streams of unutterable Delight must overspread our Minds, when we consider, that by instructing the Ignorant, discountenancing Vice, and cherishing Virtue, we are fitting Souls for *Heaven*?

Every Time we *think* of having been engag'd in such Designs as these, we cannot but *rejoice and be exceeding glad*: And *this our Joy no Man taketh from us*. 'Twill accompany us thro' every Circumstance of Life: 'Twill *season* the Enjoyments of Prosperity: 'Twill *buoy* us up under the Storms of Affliction: 'Twill *cheer* us when languishing upon a Sick-Bed; and give us a Taste of the *next* Life before we depart out of *This*. So noble, so extensive, so constant a Pleasure, will from the Exercise of Liberality be imparted to us all *in General*.

And as for *You in particular*, who go down to the Sea in Ships, and cast your Bread upon the Waters in another Sense, even by occupying your Business in great Waters: For you who frequently see the Works of the Lord and his Wonders in the Deep: What a mighty Complacency must it afford, to reflect upon the grateful Wishes of those who have been Partakers
of

of your Bounty, constantly attending you for a *prosperous Voyage*, and a *happy Return*! And when *the stormy Wind ariseth which lifteth up the Waves* to be Mountains high, how great a Comfort must it be to consider, that your *Faith working by Charity*, may be sufficient to remove *eventhose dreadful Mountains*? And when you reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken Man, and are at your *Wit's End*, so that your Souls are ready to melt away because of the Trouble; what a refreshing Cordial must it administer to your drooping Spirits, to think that the Prayers of *the Children*, whose virtuous Education has been promoted by your Assistance, are ascending for their Benefactors to the *Mercy Seat*, and may prevail for *stilling the raging of the Sea*, and at the same Time come down in kindly Gales to bring you safely unto the Haven where you would be? At least your *tumultuous Thoughts* may in some degree be *calm'd* with this Reflection, that tho' *their Prayers* should be heard for your temporal Deliverance, your *Alms* will nevertheless be presented as a Memorial before the Most High; and procure for you, through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Redeemer, a more blissful Admittance into a far happier

pier Port, as soon as you are launch'd out into the Ocean of Eternity.

Which suggests, for a Conclusion of the Whole, the *bigbest* Encouragement to the Duty I have been recommending; and what ought to be our chief Joy, and *Crown of Rejoycing*, to wit, the Reward that awaits it in *another* World. Whether we shall *find* this Reward in a few, or *after many Days*, we know not; but *This* we know, that *if it should tarry*, we have just Reason *with Patience to wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry*: And when it comes 'twill make an ample Amends for the Time it has been delayed. For *this*, and *this only*, is equal to the *vast* Desires of an immortal Soul: It being Great, *exceeding abundantly* Great, beyond all that we can express or imagine; and the Duration of it to be measured by none who is unable to *Number the Days of Eternity*. All the Enjoyments of the *present* Life are mixed and imperfect; and when *most* agreeable, but of a short Continuance: The Thread of our Life itself here being at best but a *Span long*; and so very slender, as to be easily snapt asunder, and made shorter by ten thousand Accidents. Not such are the Joys which God has prepared in the next
Life,

Life, for those who love him, and manifest their Love to him, by their Bowels of Compassion to their necessitous Brethren. These Joys will be completely satisfactory to our Capacities when exalted and enlarg'd; and after many Days, many Years, many Ages, many Millions of Ages, have been spent in an uninterrupted Fruition of 'em, they will be still increasing upon us; and we shall find ourselves enravish'd with a Flow of ever-new Delight, no nearer to an End than the Moment it began.

Surely then if we have *a due Respect unto the Recompence of this immense Reward*, we cannot but be inspired with the most generous Resolutions, and gladly embrace every Opportunity we meet with, of doing kind Offices to *to the Poor and Needy*. Such Offices, we may be certain, are requisite to qualify us for the Happiness of Heaven; and to *such Offices that Happiness is particularly promis'd*. For these are *the Words of the Lord Jesus; it is more blessed to give, than to receive*. And by the same Oracle of Truth, we are told, that *the Poor cannot recompence us, but we shall be blessed, for we shall be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just*. Then every Labour of Love we have been employ'd in, shall be plac'd to our Account; and even so small a Thing as *a Cup of cold Water*, that has been given with a charitable Mind, *shall not loose its Reward*.

May we therefore always be ready to Re-

lieve him that is a thirst; for then we shall hereafter be invited to take the *Water of Life* freely. May we chearfully contribute to fill the hungry Soul with Goodness; for then we shall be welcome to sit down at the marriage Supper of the Lamb. May we rejoyce to cloath those who are destitute of Raiment; for then we shall escape the dismal Sentence that was pronounc'd upon him, who had not on a wedding Garment. And when our Assistance is desir'd to train up Children in the Way wherein they should go; may we be so wise as to comply therewith; for then we shall be instrumental in turning many into the Paths of Righteousness; and for that Reason, shall shine forth as the Brightness of the Firmament; yea brighter than the Stars for evermore.

In a Word, let us remember, that the Saviour and Judge of all Mankind, has condescended to make our indigent Brethren his Representatives upon Earth; and appointed Them to receive the Tokens of our Love to Him. And could any of us, do you think, be so monstrously ungrateful, as to deny any Alms to HIM who shed his Blood for Us, was it possible that He should stand in Need of it? *HE* cannot indeed stand in Need of it *Himself*; but yet we may behold Him, at This very Time, appearing in the Form of a Servant; and calling for Relief in the Wants of these poor Children. And He hath been pleased to let us know, that He will as highly value the Kindnesses we show to Them, as if they were shown to His Own Person,

Person, and in the last Great Day of final Retribution, will distinguish us with the Marks of His Favour accordingly. This is evident from the Description of His Proceedings upon that *tremendous* Day; which He hath graciously left for our *Correction, Comfort, and Instruction*, as it is transmitted to us in the *xxvth* of *St. Matthew*. Which being so particularly expressive of our Duty; so very awful, moving, and persuasive; and therefore so proper to enforce *All* I have deliver'd, I shall therewith put an End to this Discourse. *When the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of his Glory. And before him shall be gathered all Nations; and He shall separate them one from the other, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats. And He shall set the Sheep on His right Hand, and the Goats on his left. Then shall the King say to them on His right Hand, Come Ye blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for You from the Foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and Ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and Ye took me in: Naked, and ye cloathed me: I was sick, and Ye visited Me: I was in Prison, and Ye came unto me. Then shall the Righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, When saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee Drink? When saw we Thee a Stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and cloathed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick,*

and in Prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto You, forasmuch as Ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Then shall he say also to them on His left Hand, Depart from Me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no Meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no Drink: I was a Stranger, and ye took Me not in: Naked, and ye cloathed Me not: Sick, and in Prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, When saw we thee an hungred, or a thirst, or a Stranger, or naked, or sick, or in Prison, and did not administer unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, forasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye did it not unto Me. And these shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.

A Brief ENQUIRY into the CAUSES Why the Word Preach'd doth not Profit; together with a Consideration of the Folly and Danger of being influenc'd by them.

FROM the Time that I came to Years of Maturity, my Thoughts have been frequently

quently taken up in reflecting upon the Successfulness of *the Word Preached* among us". I don't find any sufficient Reason to induce me to believe, that there were ever better Sermons deliver'd to the Professors of Christianity since the Days of the Apostles, than there are now in the *Church of England*. Herein the *Duties* of our Religion are illustrated and press'd home, in the clearest Manner: The *Articles* of our Faith are explain'd, and adapted as far as can be, to the shallowest Capacity: And *both* are set forth with all the Advantages of useful Learning, and persuasive Eloquence.

But, alas! notwithstanding these Privileges that are enjoyed by us, our Condition for the most Part is extremely deplorable: Our Behaviour most miserably clashes with the Rules which are prescribed us; and we seem to take Pleasure in *having Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darknes*, tho' the Beams of Divine Light are constantly shining about us. Thus we have a glorious *Form of Godliness* among us, but the *Power*

* Agreeably hereunto, are the following Words of a great Judge in such Cases, viz. Bishop Burnet in his Discourse of the Pastoral Care, Chap. 9. where he thus speaks concerning Preaching. " Without flattering the present Age, or any Persons now alive too much; it must be confess'd, that it is brought of late to a much greater Perfection than it was ever before at amongst us. It is certainly brought nearer the Pattern that St. Chrysostom set, or perhaps carried beyond it. Our Language is much refined, and we have returned to the plain Notions of simple and genuine Rhetorick.

of it we have almost lost: Thus the *Word* is preach'd with abundance of Care; but altho' it is *thus* preached, it *profiteth* but little.

Now since this Unprofitableness of the Word Preach'd cannot but be a great Discouragement to *Those*, whose Office it is to Preach it; since it will likewise be highly destructive of the eternal Welfare of *Those*, whose Duty it is to hear it, we must needs esteem it a Matter of the greatest Moment, Service, and Concern to Mankind; and what well deserves our most serious Application of Thought; to endeavour the Prevention of these evil Consequences of the *Word Preach'd*, by conducting all that lies in our Power, to make it bring forth its proper and expected Fruit.

This therefore is what I have determin'd to bend my Thoughts upon at this Time; that so, by the Concurrence of Divine Help, I may contribute in some Degree towards remedying this great Evil of the Unprofitableness of the *Word Preach'd*. And in order to this, I shall make it my Business,

First, To enquire into the Causes, why the Word Preach'd doth not Profit.

Secondly, To represent the Folly, and Danger of being influenc'd by them.

First, I am to enquire into the Causes, why the Word Preach'd doth not Profit.

And the first Cause I shall assign, is Ignorance in the Fundamentals of Christianity. Unless there is a good Foundation laid, we cannot rationally expect to build a durable Fabric:

And

And unless Men are well acquainted with the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, 'tis altogether as absurd to think of going on to *Perfection*.

In all Sciences whatsoever, there are certain Rudiments and Terms of Art necessary to be learn'd, before any valuable Progress can be made in them: And as they who are Strangers to the Elements of Astronomy, Medicine, and the like, cannot receive much Advantage from the best Lectures that may be read about them; so the best Sermons that can be preach'd, will communicate but little Profit to those who are ignorant of the Grounds of Divinity.

We are often oblig'd, in-handling Divine Subjects, to make use of such Terms as these; to wit, *the Covenant of Grace; the Merits of Christ; the Righteousness of a Redeemer; Repentance from dead Works; Faith; Hope; the Resurrection of the Dead; Eternal Judgment*, and the like. These are some of the Principles of the Christian Religion, and if the Meaning of *these* Words is not thoroughly understood, together with those which bear a near Relation to them, how can the Sermon be thoroughly understood which makes mention of them! But by how much the less the Sermon is understood, by so much the less must it necessarily Profit.

Would Men carefully examine into the Arguments upon which their Faith is founded: Would they endeavour to inform themselves thoroughly of the Nature of their Religion:

Religion: Would they *train up their Children* in the Knowledge of the Grounds of their Profession: Would they be diligent in hearing these expounded in the Church, and be willing, for further Instruction, to apply themselves to *those whom God hath appointed to watch over their Souls*: The Discourses which are deliver'd from the Pulpit would be then better understood, *the Word Preach'd* would be then attended with great Success.

But so long as People take up their Religion upon Trust; and can give no better Reason why they are Christians, than because they were *bred so*: So long as they reckon *Catechising* an Exercise proper only for Children to mind; when at the same time, if themselves, who are Men in Age, were question'd about the plainest Truths, they wou'd be found to be *Babes in Christ*: So long as they are contented to abide in spiritual Ignorance, and are ashamed to be made *wise unto Salvation*: So long, I say, as the Soil is thus barren and unmanur'd, the *Seed* of the Word may be plentifully sown, but *the Harvest* truly will be but small.

Secondly, Another Cause of the Unprofitableness of the Word Preach'd, is Worldly-mindedness. This our blessed Saviour hath taken Notice of, as a great hinderer of the Efficacy of Preaching. For in his Parable concerning this Matter, which we meet with in the 13th of *St. Matthew*, wherein he most aptly compares the Word Preach'd to Seed sown in the Ground, he tells us, that *some Seed fall*
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among Thorns, and the Thorns sprung up, and choak'd them. And what he meant by those Expressions, he himself has explain'd at the 22d Ver. of that Chap. He that received Seed among Thorns, is he that beareth the Word: And the Care of this World, and the Deceatfulness of Riches, choak the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Every body knows, that Thorns do greatly damage the Grain among which they are suffer'd to grow, by overshadowing its Blade when shot up, by weakning the cherishing Influence of the Sun, or by drawing off too large a Share of the Fatness and Moisture of the Earth from its Root. And 'tis equally certain, that when worldly Affectious, and covetous Desires reign in the Heart of Man, they are no less injurious with respect to the *Word Preach'd*. For they engross his most active Thoughts: They make his *very Soul*, as it were, *cleave to the Dust*: They hurry him on to a furious Pursuit of the Wealth of this *present Life*, and thereby render him careless and unmindful of those Discourses, which concern the *Life which is to come*.

'Tis in vain to talk of procuring an *Inheritance in Heaven*, to those who are fully bent upon *laying up for themselves Treasures upon Earth*: Where *Mens Treasure is, there their Hearts must be also*: This will perplex them with Anxiety and Solitude about many needless Things, so that they will

want an Opportunity and Leisure to regard the *one Thing that is needful*.

Moreover, when Men are wedded to the World, they are too much in Love with Riches, to be willing to part with any of them in Obedience to Christ's Commands, and therefore it is not very strange that Sermons, which declare their Obligation to such an Obedience, fail of having a due Influence upon them. Such narrow-soul'd Wretches, as are continually groveling upon the Earth, have no Gust or Relish of those refin'd Joys, which eternally flow from God's *Right Hand*, and upon that Account they will not be persuaded to seek diligently after them: They place but a mean Esteem and Value upon the *Crown of Glory*, which *fadeth not away*; and for that Reason they start back at the Thoughts of being at any Charges, in order to obtain it.

We have an Instance of these sad Consequences of Worldly-mindedness, in the 10th of St. Mark, where we read of a young Man, who came to Christ to know, what he should do to inherit Eternal Life: After he had told Christ, that he had observ'd the Commandments from his Youth, Jesus said unto him, *One Thing thou lackest: Go thy way, sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come take up the Cross, and follow me*. But mark what follows: *He was sad at that Saying, and went away grieved, for he had great Possessions: Upon these his Heart was fixed: In these his*
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Happiness was plac'd, and *from* these he would not part, tho' he might have entered into the Kingdom of God by doing so.

And the Case is much the same with Worldly-minded Men in these Days. For tho' the present Circumstances of the Church do not put them to the Trial, whether they will resign up *all* for the Sake of Christ; yet they *do*, and always *will* try, whether they will employ their Substance to the Succour of his poor Members; whether they will according to their Abilities, *feed the Hungry, cloath the Naked, and relieve the Needy*. But these Things such Persons abhor the Thoughts of doing, and therefore when we Preach about them, and use the strongest Motives to enforce their Observance, our Sermons are sure to be slighted; or else to be accounted grievous *hard Sayings, such as they are not able*, because in truth, *not willing to bear*. They frame several silly Pretences to justify their Uncharitableness; as that they shall be reduced to Poverty by being open-handed, or may want themselves by being liberal to others: Which Pretences imply a provoking Distrust of Divine Providence; and at the same Time most evidently show, that they had rather venture to be *damn'd*, than to be *starv'd*.

Thirdly, Another Cause why the Word Preach'd doth not profit, is want of Attention. 'Tis a melancholy but withal a just Observation, that some Persons will lend a very

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attentive Ear to trifling Matters, which will do them little or no good; and yet suffer themselves to be easily diverted from hearkening to those Truths, upon the embracing of which their everlasting Welfare depends.

Whilst we are Preaching, we have too many Opportunities of seeing how soon, and how frequently Mens Attention is drawn away from regarding our Discourses. Sometimes we may behold 'em talking to one another: Sometimes they are staring in an idle Manner after those who happen to come into the Church: And sometimes they are very quietly lulling themselves to sleep. These and such like Means doth Satan make use of, *to catch away the World*, and hinder it from taking Root in Mens Hearts, And Sermons that are preach'd to such Persons, may be properly resembled to *Seed fallen upon the Highway*; they are utterly lost upon them.

If People are not attentive to the *Word Preach'd*, it cannot make any lasting Impression upon their Souls: If it doth not make any lasting Impression upon their Souls, they cannot remember it, and meditate upon it: And if they don't remember it, and meditate upon it, they cannot make it serve for the Increase of their Knowledge, the Direction of their Judgment, the Regulation of their Will and Affections, or the Reformation of their Practice. But if the *Word Preach'd* doth not serve some of these Purposes, it doth not edify, it doth not profit.

Fourth.

Fourthly, Another Cause why the Word Preach'd doth not profit, is Self-conceit in the Hearers of it. Self-conceit is an undue and over-sord Valuation of one's own Abilities: When Men are swell'd with a great Opinion of these, they do for the most Part entertain very mean Thoughts of the Accomplishments of others. Hence it comes to pass, that they reckon Themselves wiser than their Teachers; and account the most excellent Discourses deliver'd by them, no better than Foolishness of Preaching.

Such wise Fools, whose Deportment is always *right in their own Eyes*, disdain to be convinc'd that they are ever in the Wrong, by those whom they vainly imagine to have less Knowledge than themselves: They disregard the most useful Doctrines, and cast the most wholesome Advices *behind their Backs*; and instead of trying to be better'd by the Sermons which they hear, they censure and villify the Qualifications of the Persons who preach.

An Entertainment of this Nature, *St. Paul* met with at *Athens*; which we read of in the 17th of the *Acts of the Apostles*, at the 18th and 32d Verses. *Then certain of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encounter'd him: and some said, What will this Babbler say? Other some, He seemeth to be a Setter forth of strange Gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the Resurrection: And when they heard of the Resurrection of the Dead, some mocked.*

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Those Heathen Philosophers, placing a great Confidence in their *own* Conceptions of Things, and conceiving very *high* Notions of their own Learning and Wisdom, could afford but little Esteem for the Abilities even of an *Apostle*: Hereby they were hinder'd from weighing his Discourses with that Consideration which they deserv'd; yea, and were induc'd to treat both *him*, and the *Truths* which he preach'd, not so much with a contemptuous Air of Neglect, as with Mockery and Derision.

And a Man must have made but *slight* Observations upon the Practice of the World, who hath not experienc'd the like Behaviour in some that are called Christians, with Respect to the *present* Preachers, and preaching of the Word. For how frequently may we behold 'em endeavouring to ridicule their Persons, and disparage their Sermons? How often may we see Men that are *exceedingly* wise in their own Conceits (tho' in reality they are furnish'd but with a slender Share of *common* Sense) take upon 'em to be competent Judges of the Niceness, or Indecorum of their Minister's Discourses? *I can see no great Matter in this*, says one. *He has made but a poor Business of it*, says another. And a third arrogantly intimates, *that he could do better himself*.

In a Word, how common is it in this forward Age, for the most illiterate Mortals, who understand but little of their own Mother Tongue, to pretend to criticize upon
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the Property of the Expressions we make use of; to pass Sentence upon the Method we observe, and to find Fault with the most elaborate Compositions?

After this Manner doth Self-conceit operate in those who are overwhelm'd with it. It renders them obstinate in the Opinions they have taken up: It makes 'em preverfly go on in the Courses they have begun: It puts them upon spending their Time in carping at the *Word Preach'd*; and utterly debars them from reaping a due Advantage by hearing it. Such Persons therefore may not unfitly be compared to *the deaf Adder, which stoppeth her Ears*; inasmuch as they seem resolv'd not to be influenc'd by *the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely*.

Fifthly, Another Cause of the Unprofitableness of the Word Preach'd, is Prejudice against the Preachers of it. Prejudice I take to be an ill-natur'd Dislike of another, grounded upon some bad Opinion of him. This the Devil is very forward to raise in the Minds of the People, against those who be ordain'd the Ministers of Religion; as well knowing, that the Success of their Ministry will be very much hindred, wheresoever there is a Prejudice conceiv'd against their Persons.

Now the usual Ways by which he leadeth Men to be prejudic'd against their Ministers, are by setting them in wrong Lights; and painting them in false Colours.

Thus, if they preach against any Sins that are common among their Hearers, their

Discourses shall be represented, as proceeding rather from Ill-will than a Religious Zeal; and the Sharpness of their Satyr shall be interpreted to point, not so much at Vice it self, as at those that are guilty of it; who upon this Account will be tempted to take up a grievous Disgust at them for their Pains.

Thus again; let a Clergyman's Behaviour in the Conduct of his Life be never so harmless and inoffensive, there will not be wanting some, who, by the false Colours that are put upon it, shall be persuaded to make him the Object of their lasting Displeasure.

Of Prejudice rais'd by the former of these Means, *John the Baptist* had very woful Experience. For tho' *Herod the Tetrarch* knew him to be a just Man and an Holy, and did for some time bear him gladly; yet when he told him of the heinous Sin he committed, in having his Brother *Philip's* Wife, his Anger and Dislike grew so great, that he imprison'd the Preacher for his Plain-dealing: And then he was not secure from the spiteful Resentment of *Herodias*; for she burn'd with such prodigious Prejudice and Hatred, as would be quench'd by nothing, but the Blood of the bold Reprover.

And of Prejudice rais'd upon Account of a Minister's Behaviour in the Conduct of his Life, we have Instances, with Relation to the same *John the Baptist*, and our Blessed Saviour, from the Jews; which are taken notice of by Christ himself.

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JOHN the Baptist came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and they said, he hath a Devil. He did not eat and drink so freely as other Men; neither did he converse much with them; but led a very abstemious and solitary Life: Upon which Accounts they reckon'd him possess'd with a Devil, and took up a Prejudice against him. *But the Son of Man, that is, Christ Jesus, came eating and drinking, and they said, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.* Our blessed Saviour convers'd with the Jews in a very familiar Manner; he went and feasted with them when invited; and kept Company with wicked Men, upon Prospect of making them better. But this innocent Deportment could not screen him from the Slander of malicious Tongues: The Familiarity of his Behaviour was misconstru'd by the perverse Jews; and his Freedom offended them no less than the Reservedness of his Fore-runner.

And thus it happens to the Ministers of Christ in these Days. If we severely lash the prevailing Vices of the Age, and acquaint People with the dangerous Consequences of being ensnared by 'em; we are often esteemed their *Enemies for telling them the Truth*, tho' our Discourses are owing to a charitable Concern for their Welfare.

Thus again; if our Behaviour is *close and retir'd*, and we take Delight in Solitude, or being much alone; we shall be censur'd by

many as proud and haughty, be our Humility never so deep.

But if we are of an *open* Conversation, of a sociable Temper and Disposition; 'tis ten to one that we are condemn'd and defam'd as luxurious and intemperate, tho' we were never known to exceed the Bounds of Sobriety.

After this Manner are the Ministers of Religion set in wrong Lights, and painted in false Colours; that so the People may be prejudic'd against them, and the End of their Office may be thereby defeated.

One might reckon up several other Causes of this Prejudice, was it needful. But it signifies little from whence it springs, since by whatsoever Cause 'tis affected, 'twill very much obstruct the Efficacy of the *Word Preach'd*, and deprive those in whom it is predominant, of that Benefit they might otherwise receive thereby.

Our Lord and Master perceiv'd this himself, in the Execution of his Prophetical Office: All his admirable Discourses prevail'd not upon those who cherish'd a Prejudice against him, tho' *his Lips dropp'd as the Honey Comb, and his Tongue was as the choice Silver*. He could not affrighten them from their Sins, by denouncing the *severe Judgments* which hung over them; neither could he *soften* their stony Hearts by displaying the mild Rays of *unbounded Mercy*.

And they to whom he hath committed the Ministry of Reconciliation, and the like Un-
fruit-

fruitfulness of preaching among those who are prejudic'd against them. By setting the *Terrors of the Lord in array*, they cannot persuade such Persons to forsake their evil Courses; neither by declaring the *Goodness of God*, can they lead 'em to Repentance.

Sixthly, Another Cause, and the last I shall now mention, why the Word Preach'd doth not profit, is *Unbelief*. This is taken notice of by the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, in the fourth Chapter, at the second Verse: *The Word Preach'd*, says he, or ^a the Word of hearing, *did not profit them, not being mix'd with Faith in them that heard it.* Which Words were spoken with Reference to the *Jews*, but are equally true when applied to other unfruitful *Hearers of the Word*. Whereforever an *evil Heart of Unbelief* prevails, it will certainly hinder the Efficacy of Preaching: Sermons that are deliver'd to such Persons as disbelieve the Truths contain'd in them, are like Seed scatter'd upon Rocks; one may as rationally expect that a Crop of Corn should be produced out of *these*, as that any substantial Advantage should redound from preaching to *those*.

Indeed Unbelief is the chief Cause of the Unprofitableness of preaching; and that to which the other Causes, in a great Measure, owe their Original. Hence, there is Reason to think, it chiefly is, that Men contentedly lay themselves down in *Spiritual Ignorance*:

ὁ λόγος τῶν ἀκούων

That

That they fix their Hearts upon the Things of this World : That they are inattentive to the *Word Preach'd* : That they are puffed up with vain Imaginations of their own Abilities : And sower'd with Prejudice against the spiritual Guides.

A Lively Faith, is a vigorous and active Principle : and were People endued with it, they would then be careful to get acquainted with the Truths and Grounds of their Religion : They would not inordinately cleave to the Interest of this Life, but would make it their main Business *to lay up for themselves Treasures in the next* : They would attentively hearken to the *Word Preach'd* : They would be humble and lowly-minded : They would not be prejudic'd against their Teachers ; but *esteem them as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.*

Thus have I enquir'd into the principal Causes, *why the Word Preach'd doth not profit.* There are other Causes which might have been enlarg'd upon ; but, I conceive, they are Branches of, and reducible to, or have been hinted at under, *these* which I have examined : And, I believe, I may be bold to say, that if these were remov'd, *the Seed of the Word would be received into good Ground, and would bring forth Fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold.*

In order therefore to remove these Causes, I proceed to the

Second Thing propounded, Namely, to repre-

represent the Folly, and Danger, of being influenced by them.

And First, For Ignorance in the Fundamentals of Christianity. The Folly of lying under this, will, I suppose, be readily granted by any one that gives his Mind the Liberty of a short Reflection upon it. For, ~~since~~ since Wisdom doth consist in searching after, and acquiring profitable Knowledge, and using that well which we have obtained; it must needs be a great Piece of Folly, to live in the Neglect and Want of such Knowledge as we shall have certain Occasion to make use of.

Now because it is a Duty incumbent upon every Christian, to grow in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; because in order to a Progress in this Knowledge, 'tis necessary that we be acquainted with the Principles thereof; therefore to abide in Ignorance of these Principles, can be no small Degree of Folly and Imprudence.

Nay, forasmuch as our Wisdom is of so much the higher Worth, by how much the more valuable and momentous the Things are to us which we know; it will follow by a Parity of Reason, that the Discredit of our Folly must increase, in Proportion to the Importance which the Things are to us, whereof we are Ignorant. But now the Principles and Doctrines of Christianity may justly be reckoned of the chiefest Concernment to Christians: As therefore a right Knowledge of them is the best Wisdom we can attain unto

unto ; so to be unacquainted with them, is an Argument, of the most *blameable* Weakness and Inconsideration we can be guilty of. *The Heart of him that hath Understanding seeketh Knowledge ; and they are the greatest Fools, who despise this Wisdom and Instruction.*

Secondly, For Worldly-mindedness. Were the Riches of *this* World more valuable than those of the *next*, we should act wisely in making them the chief Objects of our Love and Pursuit: But if *Heaven is higher than the Earth* ; and the Things *above* infinitely surpass the Things *below* ; then to hunt mostly after *these*, yea, or to have but an equal Regard for 'em with *those*, is a Conduct which can't be cleared from the Imputation of extreme Foolishness.

For the Wisdom and Folly of our Pursuit must be judged of, by the Worth of the Things which we pursue, and the Manner after which we pursue them. And when several Objects of the highest Moment are presented to us, where by not chusing the *best*, we should become very great Losers ; if we would not fall under the Reproach of Weakness, we must, before we determine our Choice for either of them, carefully examine into their Excellency ; and according to *this*, our Will must be guided ; our Love of them heighten'd ; our Diligence and Concern about them increased-

Now I would know of Worldly-minded Men, whether they have weighed the Riches of the *present* Life against the Treasures of *that*

that which is to come; and which they reckon to be of the greatest Value.

If they never made any such Examination, their Proceedings are manifestly rash and inconsiderate.

If they acknowledge the good Things of the *other World*, to be infinitely better than *this*, how mad and foolish are they in not making it their principal Care to be qualified for the Attainment of *them*!

But if they reckon the good Things of the *present Life* to be of the highest Worth; it may be justly concluded, that their Thoughts and Imaginations are senseless and vain; and argue their *Minds blinded by the God of this World*.

For if the Light of Revelation and Experience was suffered to shine in upon them, they could not but discern a vast Difference between these Things; *that the Things which are seen are unsatisfying, inconstant, fleeting, and temporal; but that the Things which are not seen will fill our, largest Capacities, and are moreover fixed, durable, and eternal*: And whoever sees this must allow, that these *last mentioned* ought to sit uppermost in our Esteem; and that therefore we do not behave ourselves wisely, unless we *seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*; and have but an inferior, low Regard to all other Things; of which as much as is necessary will be then *added unto us*, without any *distracting* Care of ours.

Thirdly, For want of Attention. Every
Man

Man that comes to Church doth, or ought to propose to receive some Benefit from the Discourses which are there deliver'd: And in order to this, 'tis necessary that he should *diligently keep his Thoughts* from wandering to other Subjects, and closely attend to what is spoken. For tho' *the Word of God be quick and powerful; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, for thoroughly furnishing a Christian unto all good Works;* yet it doth not ordinarily exert its Influence upon us, or impart its Profitableness, unless our Hearts are open and ready to receive it.

Upon which Accounts, no doubt it was, that our Saviour and his Apostles so usually address'd themselves to their Hearers, in such Speeches as these: *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear: Ye that fear God, give Audience: Men, Brethren, and Fathers, bearken:* From all which, this plain Truth is intimated; namely, that Attention to the *Word Preach'd*, is a Mean necessary to be used by those, who intend to be better'd thereby.

Whosoever therefore suffers himself to be overcome by Sleep; or indulges his Thoughts the Liberty of ranging after other Matters, when he should be minding what the Minister says, or any other ways withdraws his Attention from the Preaching of the Word: Whosoever does this, I say, neglects the Means that are necessary to attain the End, or Advantage he ought to propose

in coming to hear it ; and for that Reason, justly deserves the Reproach of Folly : For as it is a Point of Wisdom to propose a good End, and to take the Way that will lead to it ; so 'tis the *Reverse* of Wisdom, either not to design a good End at all ; or when we have design'd, to disuse the Means, without which, it cannot be compass'd.

Fourthly, Another Cause to which we imputed the Unprofitableness of the Word Preached, was Self-conceit in the Hearers of it. And the Folly of being govern'd by this, all Men of Sense will readily acknowledge : Even those who are guilty of it themselves, are forward to censure it in others ; and frequently condemn their Neighbours Pride with greater of their own.

And truly there is great Reason for casting the Reproach of Folly upon it : For the more a Man knows, the less Cause he may see there is to have *high* Thoughts of his Knowledge ; the Knowledge of the most learned being (if compar'd with what they know not) but very *little*, and that little but *imperfectly* known. To have an Over-weening Opinion therefore of our own Notions, and to lean too much upon our own Understanding, is little better than being *fond* of Weakness, and *doating* upon Imperfection : Which Behaviour, is certainly very contrary to true Wisdom ; especially if we consider that is likewise a Bar to the farther Improvement of our Faculties ; according to the Remark of *Solomon*, Prov. xxvi. 12. *See'st thou*

thou a Man wise in his own Conceit? There is more hope of a Fock than of him. ✕

But if we more *particularly* observe, how often Self-conceit exposes Mens Ignorance, when it puts them upon talking slightly about Sermons; the Folly of being influenc'd by it, will appear still greater.

For of those who talk after this Manner, but *few* can be supposed to be competent Judges in the Case. *Few* that read, and *fewer* that hear a Discourse from the Pulpit, are capable of discerning the Beauties and Excellencies of it: These Things escape the Eyes, and are above the Reach of the Generality, who therefore when they *Censure*, *Censure at random*, frequently *dispraise* what is *truly commendable*, and *condemn* what deserves to be *highly esteem'd*: And what can discover Mens Ignorance, and render them ridiculous, if *this* does not?

And after all: Suppose that a Sermon is not fram'd so nicely as it might be: it may, notwithstanding that, be profitable to the Hearers, if they are willing to *receive with Meekness the sincere Milk of the Word*, that they may grow thereby.

And though *some* may perhaps know already as much as they shall hear, yet the *best* frequently want to have their Memories refresh'd; their Affections rais'd; their Knowledge excited to Practice, and the like: Which Advantages may be gain'd from a Discourse, that is not set off with the Embelishments of Art: And he that will
not

not receive Profit from a Sermon, because 'tis not dress'd up in *such* a Manner, shows as little Wisdom, as the Man who refuses wholesome Meat and Drink, because 'tis not serv'd in Plate. *

But if Christians will behave themselves as they ought, they must regard the Preacher's *Doctrine* more than his *Wit*; they must value the Improvement of their Understanding; the Direction of their Wills and Affections, above the tickling of their Ears, and delighting of their Fancy. And if they do so, they may from *every rational* Discourse learn something or other, which may prove beneficial to them in the Conduct of their Lives, and be Instrumental in bettering their moral Faculties, or Intellectual. *

Fifthly, Another Cause which we mention'd, as hindering the Efficacy of the Word Preach'd, was Prejudice against the Preachers of it. But is not every *lawful* Preacher an *Ambassador of Jesus Christ*: Does he not act in *Christ's* stead? In *Christ's* stead does he not persuade Men to be reconciled to God? How extremely foolish must it then be, to neglect the Means of Grace, and disregard the Terms of Reconciliation, upon Account of Prejudice against the Person who offers them!

Certain it is, such Prejudice cannot alter the Nature of Truth, or make the Ministers of Christ cease to be such. Truth will be still the same; and the Ministers of Christ will be still Ministers of Christ,

whether People are pleas'd or displeas'd with them. But now the Mind of Man is under a constant Obligation to embrace those Points which are evidently true ; and the more *worthy of Acceptation* the Truths proposed are, the more ready and willing should it be to embrace them : For Christians therefore to reject, or undervalue, any Doctrines that are evidently contain'd in the Gospel (which are certainly Truths of the highest Value and Concernment) for Christians, I say, to reject or undervalue such Doctrines, because of Prejudice against those who preach them, is to do Violence to their Understandings ; and must ever be deem'd a very irrational Behaviour.

If Men would coolly and impartially consider only upon what frivolous and unjust Grounds *Prejudice* against the Ministers of Religion is frequently taken up, it must appear from *thence* very unreasonable to be *influenc'd* thereby.

But it must appear still *more* unreasonable, if it is likewise view'd in the Light which we have *now* considered it in ; namely, as being instrumental in depriving Men in a great Measure of the Benefit of their Ministry ; and consequently of injuring themselves in the most weighty and important Concerns. *

Our blessed Saviour foresaw, how forward an ungrateful World would be to treat the Preachers of his Gospel with Disaffection, and to slight the Message they are sent about :

about: And he hath declar'd his Mind, with Relation to this Treatment, after such a Manner, as one would think should be sufficient to deter, from being guilty of it, all those who profess any Reverence for him. For how little a Matter soever Men of deprav'd Judgments may count it, 'tis most undoubtedly true, that the Hatred and Contempt which is shown to the Ministers of Christ, reflects upon Christ himself; and Men cannot despise *them*, and *their* Message, but they must at the same Time affront their Redeemer: This is plain from his own Words, which he spoke to those whom he commission'd whilst he was upon Earth, and in them to all their Successors; *Luke* *ix. 16. He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*

Sixthly, The last Cause we assign'd for the Unprofitableness of the Word Preach'd, was Unbelief. Which certainly argues as much Folly and Weakness, as any of the former. For when any Points are sufficiently prov'd to be true, especially those which are of Concernment to us, we cannot refuse to believe them without disobeying the Dictates of right Reason; right Reason constantly requiring us to believe all such Things as are so recommended.

Now that the Doctrines of the Christian Religion are of this Kind, is most apparent: Upon the embracing of these Doctrines our eternal Well-being depends, therefore they

are of the highest Concernment to us, and they have all the Evidence their Nature admits of, therefore their Truth is sufficiently proved.

For, not to launch out at the End of a Discourse into a large Consideration of the Arguments which support our Faith: Did not *the Author and Finisher of it* prove himself to be a *Teacher* immediately sent from God, in a most unexceptionable Manner? By making *the Blind see, the Deaf hear, and the Lame walk*? By *cleansing the Lepers*; by *casting out Devils*; by *raising the Dead*; by *raising himself from the Dead*; by *ascending into Heaven*; by *pouring forth the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, and first Christians*, and the like? These are Works which could not be wrought without the supernatural Assistance of Divine Power: If therefore these Works were wrought by Christ, we cannot deny the Doctrines he taught to be Divine and True, unless we blasphemously suppose that God would prostitute his Omnipotence to establish a Falshood.

Now that these Works were wrought by Christ, is witnessed by Men of good Understanding; some of whom were assured of it by the Evidence of their own Senses, and the rest by conversing with those who were so assur'd: Which Considerations evince, that they were thoroughly inform'd of the Truth of what they reported, and take away all Suspicion of their being imposed upon themselves.

And hereunto, that *they* perform'd the like Miracles; suffered severe Persecutions, and even Death it self to confirm their Reports; and *this* must show that they were Men of Integrity, and take away all Suspicion of their intending to impose upon *others*.

For these Reasons it must be granted, that they were true and credible Witnesses, such as ought to be believed in what they attested.

And that these Persons have attested and recorded the Miracles and Doctrines of Christ, is plain from their Books in the Volume of the New Testament: Which Books, that they were wrote *by them*, and receiv'd *as theirs* by the first Christians in the Age wherein they were wrote, appears from the uninterrupted Testimony of the Christian Church in every Age from that Time to this; which is the only proper Way such a Matter can be proved by.

From what hath been said, we may justly conclude, that there is sufficient Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion as contained in the Scriptures; and consequently to disbelieve it, must argue Men very foolish and unreasonable: Especially if we remember how greatly their everlasting Welfare is thereby endanger'd; it being expressly declar'd by our Saviour, *Mark xvi. 16. That he who believeth not, shall be damn'd.* Which brings me in the *Seventh and last Place, To show the Folly*

of being influenc'd by any of the foremention'd Causes, from the great Danger we shall thereby run ourselves into.

As it hath pleased God to bestow upon us so great a Blessing as the hearing of his Word *Preach'd*; so he expects that we should *bring forth Fruit* in some Measure suitable to such a Favour: And, in due Time, will severely punish those who will not be profited thereby.

In the Parable of the barren Fig Tree, which we meet with in the 13th of St. Luke; after the Master of the Vineyard had come three Years seeking Fruit and finding none; the Sentence he pronounc'd was, *Cut it down, why cumbrest it the Ground?* And tho' the Dresser of his Vineyard intreated him to spare it one Year longer, till he had dug about it and dung'd it, yet if it bore not Fruit, then after that, says he, *thou shalt cut it down.*

From whence we may learn, that altho' God doth with much Patience, and Forbearance, wait for People's Improvement under the Means of Grace; yet their still-continuing to be unfruitful, will at length provoke him to make them feel the sad Strokes of his Displeasure.

And this may be likewise gathered from the Parable of the Vineyard let out to Husbandmen; which you may find in the 21st of St. Matthew: Where after Christ had told the Jews, how the Husbandmen instead of giving the Lord of the Vineyard the Fruits thereof, beat, ston'd, and kill'd his Servants, and murder'd

der'd his own Son: At the 40th Verse he asks this Question; When the Lord of the Vineyard cometh, what will he do to those Husbandmen? They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those wicked Men; and will let out his Vineyard to other Husbandmen, which shall render him the Fruits in their Seasons. Hereupon our Saviour makes this close Application of the Parable at the 42d Verse: Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof.

The *Jews* enjoy'd many great Advantages above the rest of the World. *The Oracles of God were committed to them: To them Prophets were frequently sent to declare the Will of God: Of them, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came: Amongst them he perform'd his Miracles to prove his Divine Mission: Amongst them his first Doctrine was first preach'd: And amongst them he would have first set up his Church.*

These and several more were Favours which the *Jews* enjoy'd above the rest of Mankind: But instead of making a right Use of them, the Generality most ungratefully abused them. They disregarded the Predictions of the Prophets concerning the Christ: They would not embrace his Doctrine, nor suffer him to reign over them: And besides the Cruelties they showed to other Prophets, they did also crucify the Lord of Glory.

For these Reasons, God utterly ruined their

their Nation: And according to the terrible Denunciation of our Saviour just now mention'd, *he took away his Kingdom, or Church from them; and planted it among the Gentiles, expecting that they would bring forth better Fruits.*

Behold therefore the Goodness and Severity of God: On the Jews who fell, Severity; but towards us Goodness, if we continue in his Goodness, by behaving ourselves answerable thereunto: Otherwise we also must look to be cut off. For since God spared not the natural Branches, we ought to take heed, lest he also spare not Us: Since he deprived them of their glorious Priviledges upon Account of their Unfruitfulness under them; we have too much Reason to fear, that our Non-improvement under the like Mercies will provoke him to punish us in a like Manner, by removing our Candlestick out of its Place; and sending us a Famine of hearing the Word of the Lord.

But whether God will deal *thus* with us, or not; whether he will inflict his Vengeance upon us in this World, or suffer us to escape it here: This we may depend upon, that 'twill fall heavily upon us in the next Life.

He that despised Moses's Law died without Mercy under two or three Witnesses; of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy, who tread under Foot the Laws of the Son of God; render the preaching of his Word an useless Thing to them;

and so *do despite to the Spirit of Grace*? They who are guilty of this, may read with trembling the Declaration our Saviour has made, *Mat. x. 14, 15. Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your Words, when ye depart out of that House, or that City, shake off the Dust of your Feet: Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than for that City.*

Hence then we may see into what great *Danger* Men run themselves, by not *profit- ing* by the *Word Preach'd*: Even into the *Danger* of being *depriv'd* of that *Blessing*: Into the *Danger* of *losing* their eternal *Hap- piness*: Into the *Danger* of having the *Word of God* be unto them *the savour of Death un- to Death*. What prodigious *Madness* and *Folly* must it then be, to suffer any Cause whatsoever to prevail so far upon us, as to hinder the *Seed* of the *Word* from taking *Root* in our *Hearts*; and putting forth it's proper *Fruit* in our *Lives* and *Conversa- tions*?

Wherefore, let me intreat you that read this *Treatise*, by that *Concern* you ought to have for the *Continuance* of the *preaching* of *God's Word* amongst you: By that *Fear* you ought to be possessed with of *losing* such a *Favour*: By that *Dilligence* where- with you ought to pursue everlasting *Hap- piness*: By that *Watchfulness* wherewith you ought to beware of eternal *Misery*: By all these *Considerations*, let me persuade you
to

to make the best Use you can of the Sermons you hear ; and remove all Causes which may obstruct their Efficacy.

Suffer not yourselves to be ignorant of the Principles of your Religion, when you enjoy the Opportunities of being thoroughly acquainted with them.

Let not this World have the Ascendant over your Affections, and regard it in no greater a Degree than is consistent with your Interest in the next.

Give a close Attention to what is spoken, and afterwards meditate upon it, *searching the Scriptures*, whether the Doctrines taught you are agreeable to *them*.

Put away all Self-conceit, and high Opinions of your own Thoughts: All Prejudice against your Teachers, and Unbelief: And then, by the Grace of God, which ought always to be implored, the *Seed of the Word* will take deep Root in your Hearts ; *will bring forth Fruit to Perfection ; and be unto you the Savour of Life unto Life*. Which that it may be to every one, God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. 26 MR 59

F I N I S.

